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# Guitar Player

AUGUST 2002

## RUSH REVIVED!

Alex Lifeson  
Fires Up  
Hard Rock's  
Virtuosic Trio

## MASTER CLASS

Johnny Hiland  
on Bending Steel

## BENCH TESTS

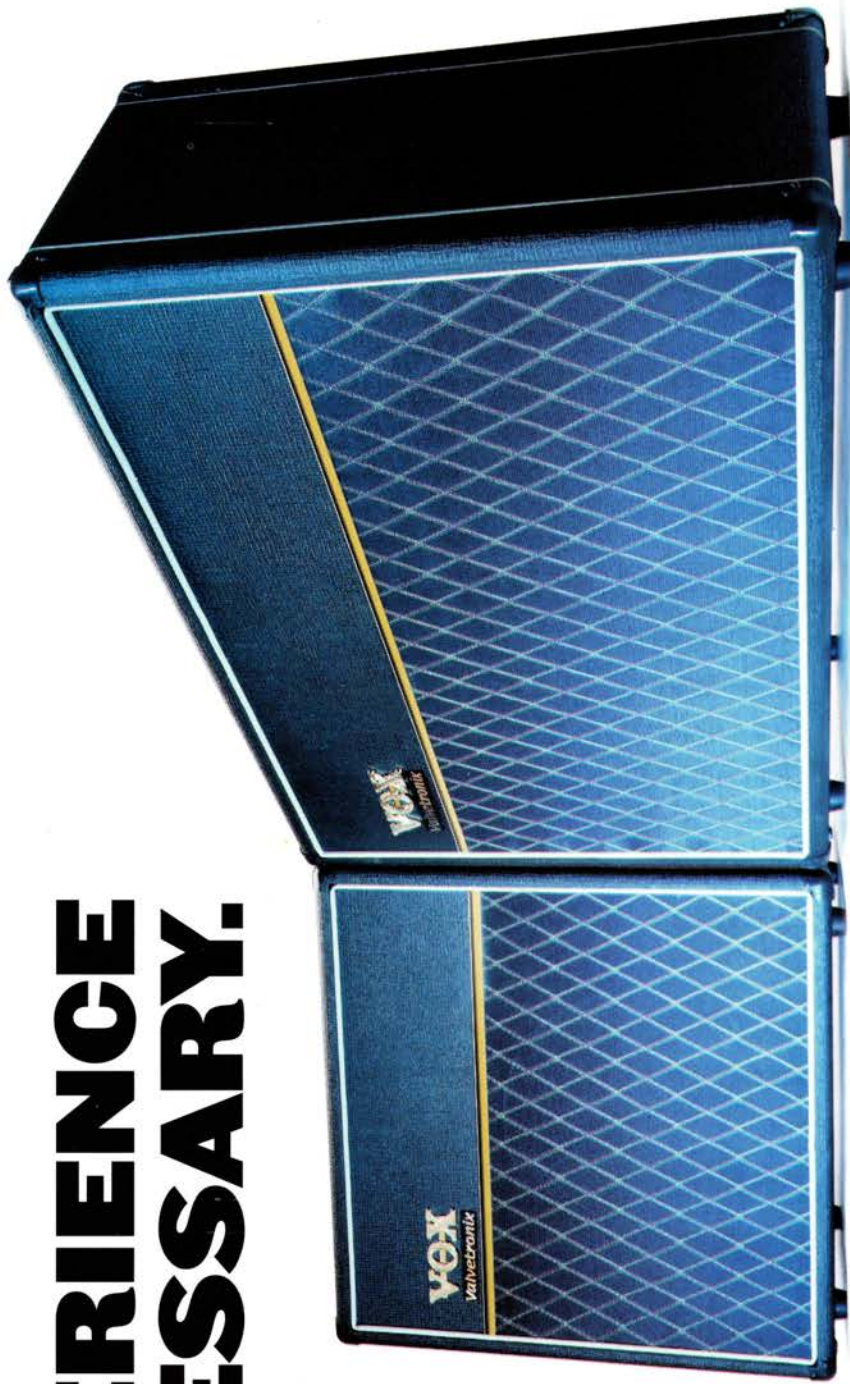
Peavey XXL • Godin Flat Five  
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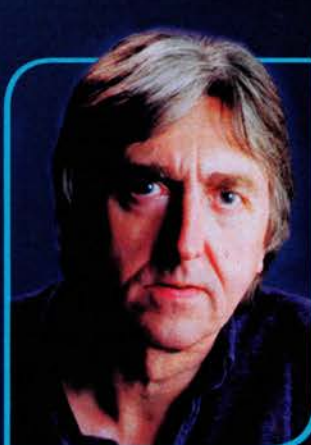
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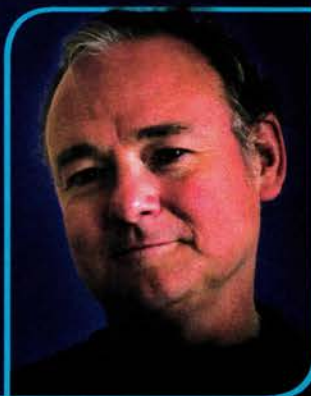
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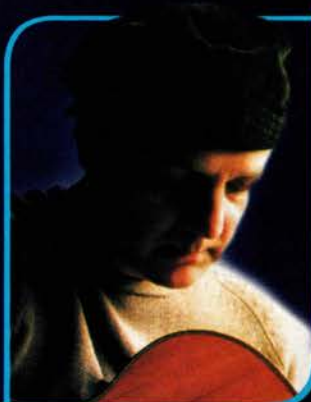
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— recorded live behind bars on a model D-28, Folsom Prison, 1968



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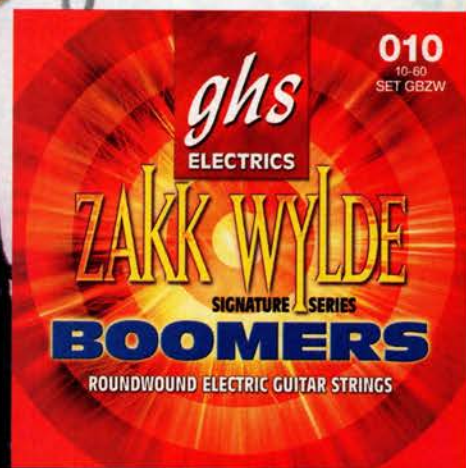


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# Guitar Player

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**M**any once-noble attributes are succumbing to terminal neglect as our society degenerates into a rat's nest of self-interest. While the 9/11 tragedy kicked our butts into a renewed sense of community, it still seems that manners, intelligence, grace, self-sacrifice, humility, and "the buck stops here" are regarded as silly things our parents and grandparents held dear—it's all near-incomprehensible plot fodder for classic flicks.

Take class, for example. This is a value that doesn't *add* value to anything. You can't spend it, use it to shore up a company's bottom line, or barter it for a better gig. But when a person, a business concern, or a sporting organization doesn't have any class, it's usually a clear indication of self-loathing,

poor management, or outright viciousness. People that *have* class are typically balanced entities that are fulfilled and happy, and are confident enough to take lumps and kudos with equal measures of quiet reflection. People with class don't boast or demean or whine or manipulate. They speak the truth, and let the truth guide their endeavors. Simple.

Now, musicians can be a paranoid and jealous lot, and we're not always gracious to those who find higher degrees of success. How do *you* act when you're confronted by a compatriot's good fortune? Are you transformed into a salivating malcontent who spits venom on all those who, in your mind, have reaped undeserved goodies? Those kind of crazy-ass reactions can be fun and even *cleansing*, but they aren't classy and they aren't

even smart.

You and I have absolutely no control over the things that someone else adores. Much as it may hurt to admit it, the success of [place favorite hated artist name here] doesn't assail all reason. In this industry, someone gets famous and/or rich because a lot of other someones dig what he or she is doing. Whine all you want, but that platinum album isn't going away simply because you don't think it should have happened. And here's something else to consider: That "talentless" artist seduced many of the same people you need to impress for success. My advice? Shut up and learn something.

After all, it's just meaningless distortion when envious musicians demean the accomplishments of their peers. Those with



class don't waste time pissing on the competition. If you have class, you put your shoulder to the wheel and work damn hard to shine the spotlight on your individual talents. And, man, if we musicians *can't* be classy, not only will we be contributing to the demise of graceful sophistication, but Frank Sinatra will surely shred our wings when we join him upstairs. Think about it.

—MICHAEL MOLENDRA

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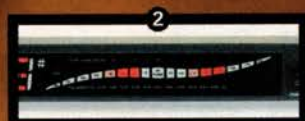
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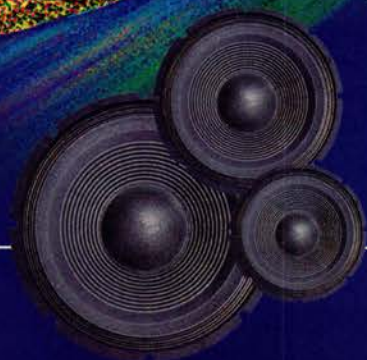




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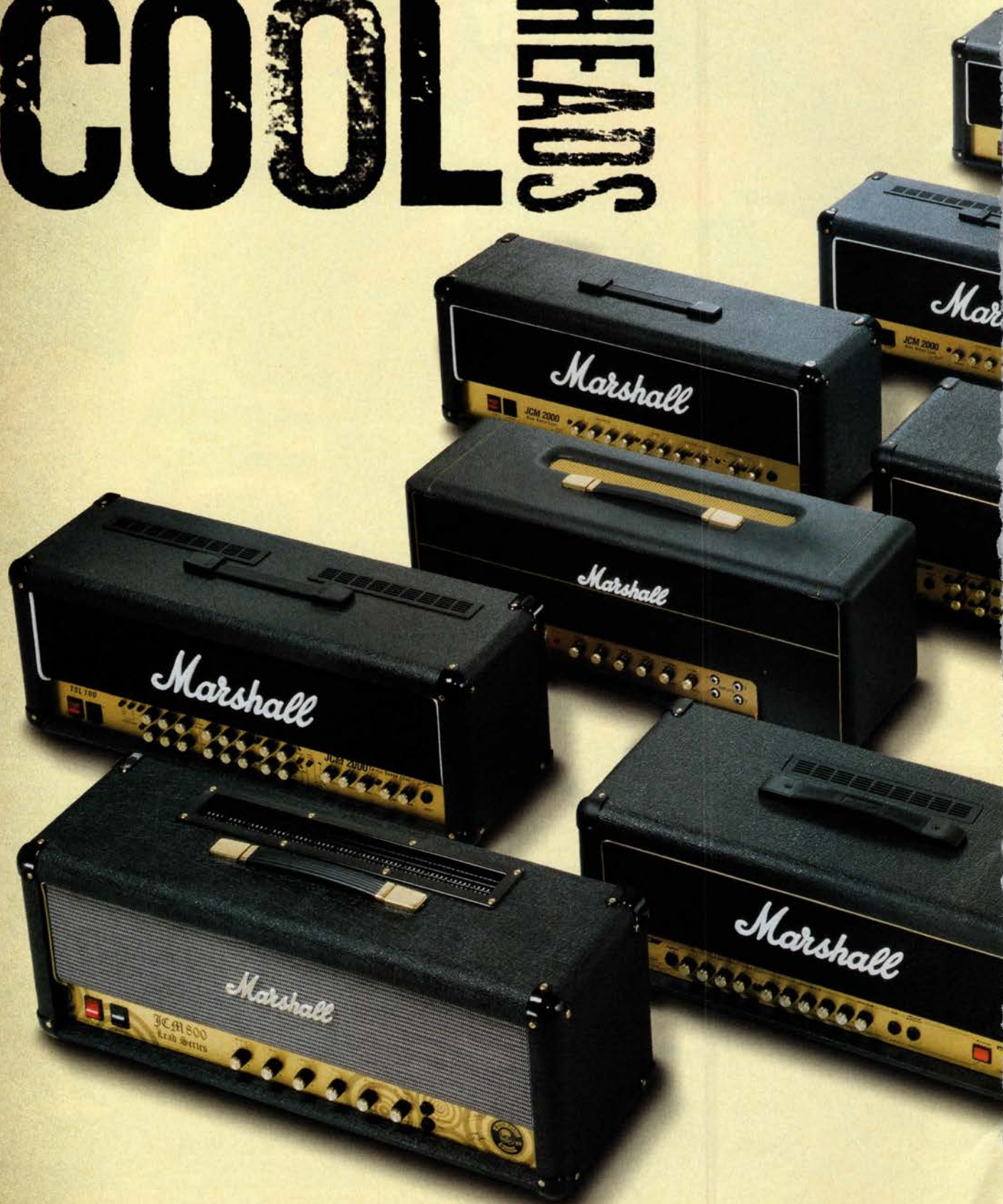
  
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# Feedback

## The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion

**D**o I understand this correctly? The June '02 cover story features a person who can't play barre chords?

Jerry Shurtleff  
Las Vegas, NV

**U**pon reading your article on Jon Spencer, I thought, "They're going to get a lot of letters about the decline of musicianship in popular music as soon as they read the quote from Spencer about being unable to play barre chords." Well, I've known several fine country players and singers who could only play open chords. And I remember seeing an elderly bluesman playing on a street corner in Wichita Falls, Texas, back in the '70s who, as far as I could tell, knew virtually *no* chords. He played wonderful music with a bottleneck. Technique and great music are not necessarily the same thing.

George Bruner  
Blanchard, ID

## Lookin' Good

**T**he new layout is great. Nothing speaks louder than full-page pictures. The June '02 issue reminded me of my high school study hall days in the mid '70s. Our school library received yearbooks from the surrounding state universities, and being a dreamhead guitarist, I couldn't wait to open those yearbooks to see who played at the spring formals. They always had full-page photos of some great groups: the Doobie Brothers, Mott the Hoople, Uriah Heep, Chicago, and others. Looking closely to see what gear those bands were using became a habit. I caught myself looking just as intently at your full-page layouts.

D.J. Preston  
Ashland, KY

## Bill Kirchen

**T**hanks for a great magazine! I've been a subscriber for more than 30 years, and every new issue of *GP* is a welcome treat. Also, thanks for featuring Tele master Bill Kirchen [June '02]. The article was very enjoyable—especially the comment that Bill made about being intimidated by the likes of Redd Volkaert. I've had similar experiences when I've

played with guitarists who have better technical abilities than me. A steel player friend took me aside once and essentially told me the same thing Kirchen said: "It's not a contest." I'm glad there's room for us all.

Jeff McLeod  
Madison, WI

## Manic Semantics

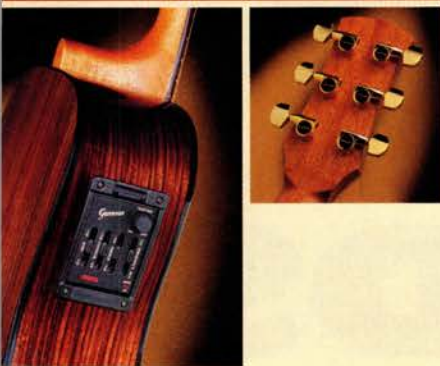
**I**'ve read and loved *Guitar Player* for 30 years, but this new vocabulary of tone you've developed lately drives me nuts. Chime, sparkle, warm, fat, grind (and let's not forget those "chewy" chorus pedals)—all these terms are trying to put into words aspects of guitar tone that are entirely subjective. They aren't helpful, because each term means something different to each person who reads it.

Examples of similar tones in well-known recordings would be a lot more helpful than these subjective terms. I read a review in *GP* recently that described a particular distortion box as having a "Spirit in the Sky" sound, and I knew *exactly* what that meant. Maybe we need a dictionary, but instead of pictures next to the definitions, you could have sound clips.

I say, stop making up words to label a sound. Who cares if the amp has chime and sparkle?

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*Play it!* If you like the sound, then it's good. This has been bothering me for a while, but I haven't written until now. Of course, it's good-natured criticism, I love *GP* more now than ever.

Richard Stevens  
Allentown, PA

## Jucifer

**F**ive minutes after reading your article on Jucifer's Amber Valentine [May '02] I was out the door to buy every CD of theirs I could find. After I got them, I put *Calling All Cars on the Vegas Strip* in my car stereo and turned it up as loud as it could go. After two minutes, I had to pull over because I was too dumb-founded to drive. Valentine sings like an angel, and sounds like all the guitar and bass players from the entire Ozzfest lineup all playing together at the same time!

I was so amazed that I went home and went online to get *more* information on the band. Then I sent her an e-mail, and I'll be damned if she didn't write back. She told me Jucifer was going to be in L.A., and I went to the show. I will tell you now—Amber Valentine is the single most serious contender for the next big thing I've seen in years. Her sound is so enormous and massive that it's

literally beyond belief. In this day and age of processed sounds and Pods, Valentine stands alone with her wall-to-wall-to-ceiling set up.

Also, I've never seen anybody in any band work so hard after a show. She hung around until every single person that wanted to meet her had done so. Amber, you rock!

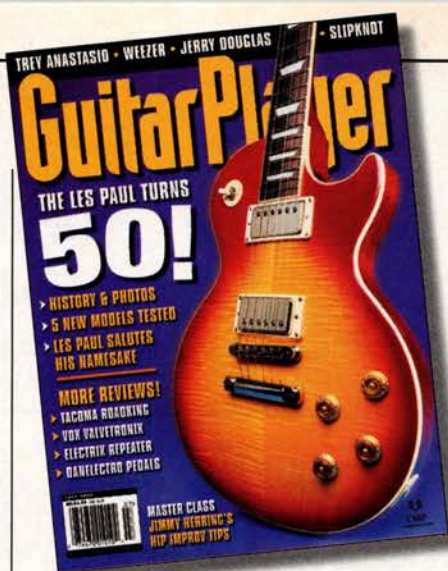
David Martin  
Los Angeles, CA

## The Reverend

**I**t's a relief to know that a guitarist of Reverend Horton Heat's [May '02] stature will 'fess up in a national publication that he still sits down with his guitar and an instructional video to learn new styles and techniques. We can all benefit from this man's guitar playing, excellent songwriting, and ability to stay humble. He is helping rockabilly stay alive by helping it evolve.

Your recent articles on artists like the Reverend and Brian Setzer (another true revolutionary) are what validates your magazine as the most ass-kicking publication ever to address this awesome, limitless thing called a guitar. I subscribe to other guitar magazines, but yours is the one I can't wait to open the mailbox and find. Thank you, *Guitar Player*, from a guitar player.

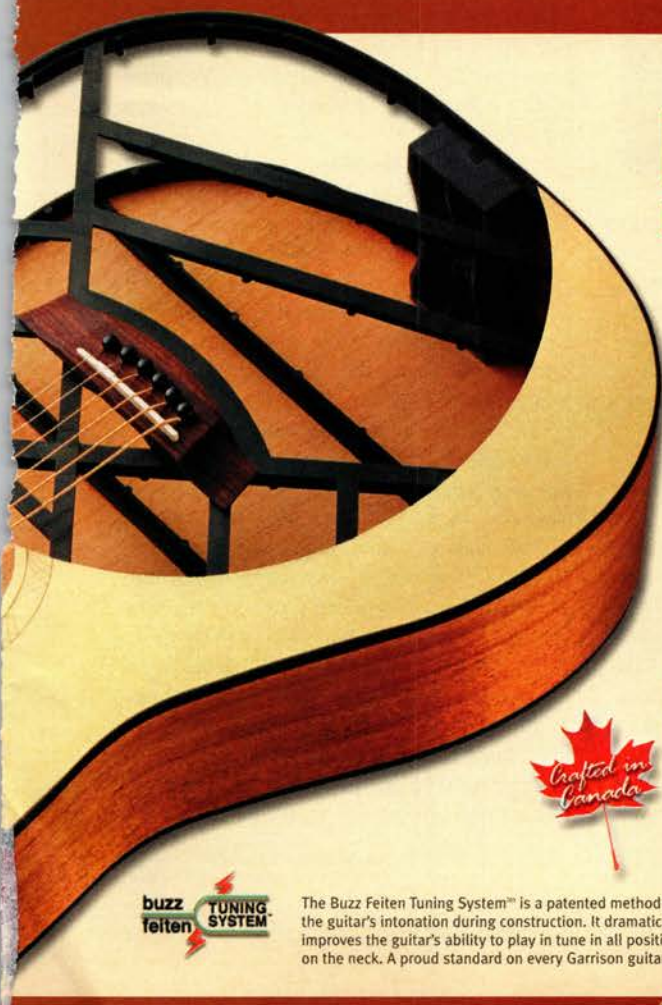
Troy Dering  
Lake Charles, LA



## OOPS!

**I**n our June '02 "New Gear" we mistakenly reported that the Aircraft Atomic 20 has one speaker. In reality, it has *two* custom-designed 10" speakers. Sorry for the mix up.

Address correspondence to Feedback, c/o *Guitar Player*, 2800 Campus Dr., San Mateo, CA 94403, or e-mail us at [guitplyr@musicplayer.com](mailto:guitplyr@musicplayer.com). *GP* regrets that until the advent of the 40-hour workday we will not be able to answer every letter.



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to cut the top, back and sides. These tools create the high-quality components our skilled technicians use to craft your Garrison guitar. Dress the frets. Set the action... just right. And make sure every guitar is enjoyable to play.

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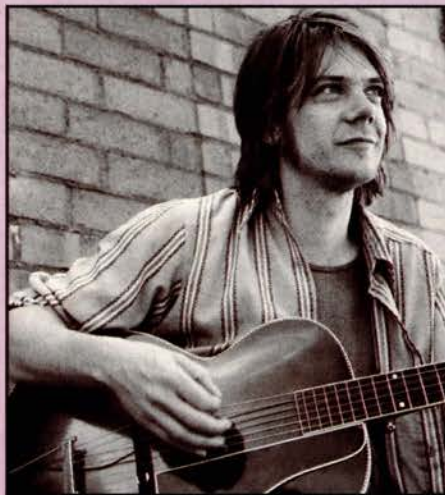
# INPUT OUTPUT

## FRETWIRE

**HEY, WHOSE JUDE IS IT?:** In April, **Paul McCartney** won a court order blocking **Christie's Auction House** from selling handwritten lyrics to "Hey Jude." McCartney claims the sheet—which was expected to fetch up to \$116,000—was either stolen from his house during one of several burglaries, or taken by someone working for him. The lyrics were sent to Christie's by Florent Tessier, who bought them on a London street for about \$24 in the early '70s. The controversial lyric sheet will remain at the auction house until ownership is established through negotiation or trial.

... **BLUES FOR KIDS:** Formed in 1998 in Los Angeles, the Sir Charles Blues Lab is dedicated to helping high-risk kids in urban areas by teaching them to play the blues. Named after blues pianist **Charles Atkins**—who has performed with **Sam & Dave**, among others—the foundation has drawn the attention and support of **Bonnie Raitt**, former-Pink Floyd frontman **Roger Waters**, **Brian May** of **Queen**, **Slash**, and **Ray Charles**. The latter two will be publicizing the organization's activities by appearing with several young blues players on upcoming segments of ABC's *Nightline* and National Public Radio's *American Routes*. ... **PASSING NOTES:** **Cesar Diaz**, 49, amp builder to

## PRODUCER'S DESK Dave Pirner



"Because I came up through punk rock, it took me a long time to figure out the virtues of different guitars," says Pirner. "I knew I'd just throw my guitar against the wall and smash it, so I never bought anything new or valuable."

**A**fter standing in front of Soul Asylum for 20 years, vocalist/guitarist Dave Pirner has come to know a few things about loud-ass guitars. But while producing his as-yet-untitled solo album [Ultimatum], he tempered his approach to guitarcraft with hip-hop sensibilities, minimalism, expanded sonic spectrums, and the critical importance of inspiration.

.....

*Do you have a particular concept for producing guitar tracks?*

Bands like System of a Down and Limp Bizkit have changed the perception of how loud a guitar can be. For example, [Limp Bizkit's] Wes Borland is interesting to me because he wants you to *feel* the guitar from a purely sonic standpoint. This is why Tony Iommi becomes more influential as time goes on. He was one of the first guys to tune down, and make the guitar sound real loud and fat. Now we all ask ourselves, "How do I make this guitar the loudest thing that anybody has ever heard on record?"

*So how do you construct a huge roar?*

The thing I did recently was position a Coles ribbon mic in front of either a Fender Bronco or a Fender Champ. To me, that captured a bigger sound than an SG through a Marshall. Lou Reed told me about the Coles, and he has been trying to record loud guitars his whole life. You gotta take what you can get from your mentors!

*Did you have to make adjustments to keep the raging guitars from overwhelming your vocals?*

The problem with my voice is that it's low, and it's very hard for a singer with a low voice to cut through loud guitars. If you listen to Chris Cornell or Robert Plant, their voices are pitched *above* the midrange frequency of the guitars so they always stand out—no matter how heavy the guitar tracks are.

The trick is to exploit the dynamic range of the guitar to work *with* your vocals, or change the way you sing. For my solo album, I decided not to use loud guitars so I could sing in a relaxed fashion that wasn't out of my range. On the new demos with Soul Asylum, however, I had to pitch the keys up higher to get my voice over Danny Murphy's roaring guitars—a Les Paul is a lot of competition for my range.

*You played all the solos on your album. How did you produce yourself?*

I'm obsessively into the one-note Neil Young approach. I think if you can play one note that sounds really good, it's better than laying down 40 notes that aren't very good. My goal was to always play the one note that nobody else would think of playing—the one note what would make people's spines tingle.

I also became aware that you get licks ingrained in your head at a young age, and many of my solos reminded me of my high school trumpet classes. The producer part of me would ask my solo self, "What's with the Chuck Mangione notes?"

It's also interesting—when you can take a hundred passes at a solo or edit something together with Pro Tools—that a soloist still has to hope for divine intervention to cut something amazing.

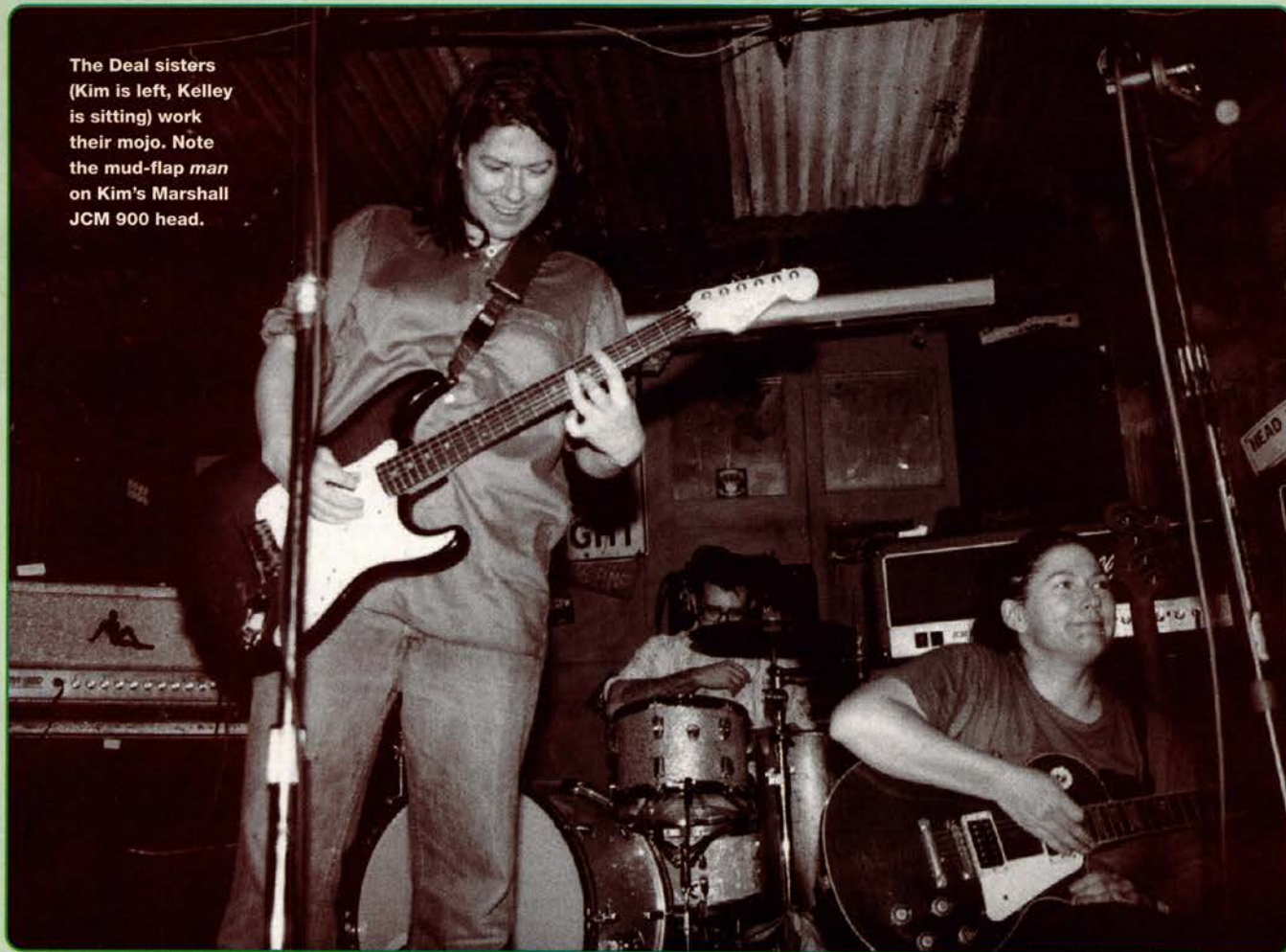
*What do you feel is the mark of a good producer?*

Production should be invisible. If you're good at producing, you're going to put the guys in the band center stage, and make a record that sounds as exciting as seeing a live show.

—MICHAEL MOLENDRA



The Deal sisters (Kim is left, Kelley is sitting) work their mojo. Note the mud-flap man on Kim's Marshall JCM 900 head.



## PERFORMANCE NOTES The Breeders

Interviewing the Breeders is like stumbling onto the soundstage of a Robert Altman film: Everyone talks all the time, and making sense of the overlapping dialog is about as easy as swallowing a Subaru. And yet, the energy driving bandleaders Kim and Kelley Deal can be intoxicating. The sisters are rabid about their music, love to talk gear, and are champions at interjections and interruptions.

Considering such impassioned personalities, it's surprising that it took almost nine years to record the followup to the Breeders' million-selling *Last Splash*. But the appearance this year of *Title TK* (Elektra) was hampered by Kelley's drug problems and rehab, various side projects, a little sisterly competition, revolving band members, and aborted studio sessions. Happily, the new album is deep, quirky, and chock full of twisted riffs and eccentric solos.

The challenge, of course, is translating

the wackiness onstage. During an interview at an East Los Angeles strip joint, the sisters and third guitarist Richard Presley discussed their live strategy.

• • • • •

*Onstage, each of you uses almost the same gear—Marshall JCM 900s, Les Pauls, Teles, and Strats. How do you define your sonic territories?*

**Kim:** It's not as much of a problem as you might think, because we're different people. Even if we played through the exact same rig, I'm going to do something that sounds like me, Richard is going to do something that sounds like Richard, and Kelley is going to play something weird.

*So the three-guitar assault is divided by stylistic, rather than tonal approaches?*

**Kelley:** Exactly. I love singing, so my strength is melodic lead parts.

**Kim:** I'm the stupid front person, so I just play rhythm.

**Presley:** My job is to bring cohesion—to fill the spaces between what Kim and Kelley do. It's pretty critical that I know when to fill out the sound, and when to drop out entirely.

**Kim:** Man, that's the thing! Sometimes it's better just to play nothing and let the listeners make up what they want to hear in their heads. On "Forced to Drive," for example, there's a verse section that begs for a solo, but we don't do anything. We decided to just leave it alone rather than do something stock and boring.

*These days, too many live shows seem totally scripted.*

**Kelley:** Absolutely. I mean, I'm basically a lazy person—and I don't have the interest or the ability to be a virtuoso—so what keeps me interested in music is the weird stuff. I'm not *trying* to be strange—I just play what I think the song needs. But I also want to challenge and surprise the audience.

—MICHAEL MOLENDIA



## FRETWIRE

the stars, passed away on April 26 from complications related to a liver transplant. After spending the '70s rebuilding and restoring amps, Diaz launched his own line of high-end tube amps and effects in the '80s. Over the years, **Bob Dylan, Keith Richards, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton, and Billy Gibbons**—just to name a few—came to rely on his expertise. . . . **Layne Staley**, lead singer of the prominent alt-metal band **Alice in Chains**, was found dead in his Seattle apartment on April 19. An autopsy revealed that the 34-year-old—whose much-publicized battle with drugs resulted in the breakup of the band in 1999—had injected himself with a mixture of heroin and cocaine. . . . **James Al Hendrix**, father of the late **Jimi Hendrix**, passed away on April 17 after a long battle with congestive heart failure. He was 82. Hendrix was the chairman of the board of **Experience Hendrix**—a company headed by James' daughter Janie L. Hendrix. The elder Hendrix also wrote the book *My Son Jimi*, which was published in 1999. . . . **A WORLD OF GUITAR:** If you're the type who plans way ahead for stellar happenings, **The First World Guitar Congress** will be held June 2-9, 2004 at Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland. **Les Paul** is honorary chairman of the event, **Mrs. Andres Segovia** will serve as honorary president, **Jim Hall** will be the house composer, and **Sharon Isbin** is one of the first confirmed performers.

## FACTORY TOUR Hughes & Kettner

It all started because of crap P.A. systems. Hans Stamer was sick and tired of being assaulted by bands that sounded awful because, well, their *sound* was awful. So the German musician/entrepreneur started building P.A. cabinets in St. Wendel, Germany. When a massive demand for the systems kicked in all over Europe, Stamer (along with his brother Lothar) was faced with the happy choice of transforming a homegrown operation into a real business. In 1984, Hughes & Kettner was launched, and the

company shifted its goals into overdrive by not just making P.A. gear, but also designing and manufacturing amps, signal processors, cabinets, and circuit boards.

"Even from the beginning, we were thinking beyond Germany," says Stamer. "And we thought, 'Maybe a German-sounding name wouldn't benefit a company making rock-and-roll amps.' So we invented Mr. Hughes—which, to us, was a very British-sounding name, and the British were obviously very good at making amps. But we also wanted to bring Germany's high-technology focus into the equation, so we decided to adopt a name that implied rock and roll *and* technological innovation. That's how Mr. Hughes and Mr. Kettner came to be."

From the company's inception, innovation has been considered almost a *duty*, and many Hughes & Kettner developments were "world firsts." In 1985, they debuted a programmable amplifier with the AS64. In 1987, came the Cream Machine—the smallest all-tube amp at the time. Hybrid amps (tube preamps with solid-state power amps) made the scene in 1988, along with the Red Box cabinet-simulating direct box. Then—among other releases—followed 1989's Access (a programmable rack-mount tube preamp), 1995's TriAmp (which has three *dual*-channel tube amps onboard), 1997's Tube Rotosphere (a tube-driven rotary cabinet simulator), 2000's zenTera (a digital-amp workstation powered by *two* 32-bit Sharp chips), and 2002's zenAmp (a more affordable alternative to the flagship zenTera).

"We make it a point to listen to musicians," asserts Stamer, "and they are who we get a lot of our ideas from."

Today, Hughes & Kettner is very nearly a self-sufficient operation. The company produces its own cabinets, designs and builds most of the circuit boards, punches out the required metalwork, and tests everything that rolls off the assembly line.

"We like to be able to develop and manufacture things as quickly as possible," explains Stamer. "If we can do something better, we will. If we can translate a technology used elsewhere into a musical application, we will. We like to keep musicians thinking, 'What are those crazy Germans up to now?'"

—MICHAEL MOLENDRA



H&K engineer Bernd Schneider working on circuit-board designs.



Putting the electronics into the casing of a Duotone amp head.



The H&K soundproof chamber is one of the biggest in Germany. It's used to critically assess audio performance without being compromised by reflections and outside noise.



## TECHNO TOOLS CD Duplication

**T**hinking of getting your music to the world via CD? There are more ways to do this than ever, so it's best to keep up-to-date on what options are available.

**Commercial manufacturing.** This initially seems the most costly option, because you have to order a lot of CDs to take advantage of quantity pricing. But having ready-to-go CDs is *way* more efficient than duplicating them one at a time yourself, and most duplication houses have mastering engineers who can make sure your music exhibits prime-time sonic quality. Another bonus with this route is that the recent economic downturn has lowered prices considerably.

**Home production via computer.** Most modern computers have drives that can burn CD-Rs. For best results, use a "burn-proof" drive such as those from TDK and Plextor. This technology lets the computer interrupt the burning

process without forcing you to scrap the process—and the CD—and start anew with another disc. If you need to cross-fade tunes—or if your songs require nonstandard spacing—make sure your drive and your software support DAO (Disk at Once) mode. In this mode, the burner writes the entire CD in one pass, rather than a track at a time.

Many consumer programs (such as Adaptec's Toast or Stomp's Click 'N Burn) support CD burning. However, I prefer digital-audio editors with CD-burning capabilities (such as Steinberg's Wavelab, Sonic Foundry's Sound Forge, and Emagic's Waveburner Pro) because their mastering functions let you enhance sound prior to burning.

Don't forget, for home-production work you'll need CD labels. Office supply stores offer software packages designed to print on blank labels.

**Home production via stand-alone CD burners.** The advantage of stand-alone burners—like those from Alesis, HHB, and Philips—is that they let you duplicate discs without tying up your computer. The down sides are a higher price tag, and the fact that you can only duplicate one CD at a time.

**Small-scale home production.** Several companies—including Primera, MediaForm, and Microboards—offer duplicators that let you load anywhere from 50 to several hundred CDs per session. However, these units vary greatly in terms of cost, capabilities, and degree of automation. With entry prices in the thousands of dollars, you'll need to produce a *lot* of CDs to justify the cost. But if your band is riding a groundswell of interest, this route may be more cost effective than commercial duplication in the long run.

—CRAIG ANDERTON



## AUCTION BLOCK Will Ray's Ebay Strategies

AUCTION ITEM: Late '50s Airline Barney Kessel Pro (no case) WINNING BID: \$450

**T**his guitar may say "Airline" on its headstock, but it's really a Kay Barney Kessel Pro in sheep's clothing—complete with the coveted Barney Kessel Gold K pickups and a set neck. I'm a big fan of Kay guitars, and the Barney Kessel series arguably represented Kay's finest hour in guitar making. The Pro is a 13" hollowbody archtop sans f-holes. Check out the cool lightning-bolt motif against the white headstock. There's no pickguard, but I think the guitar looks better without one.

The seller wanted to ship the guitar via FedEx, but when he came back with a quote of \$104, we both agreed that the UPS fee of \$25 was a more agreeable option. Shipping can make or break a deal. I've argued with many a seller over transporting gear, because the "actual shipping" costs they state they'll charge you is open to interpretation. If, for example, they hire a third party such as Mail Boxes Etc. to pack and ship a guitar, the transport costs can get pricey. It's the buyer's responsibility to ensure that he or she isn't gouged by shipping fees.

When I received this guitar, the neck had a slight

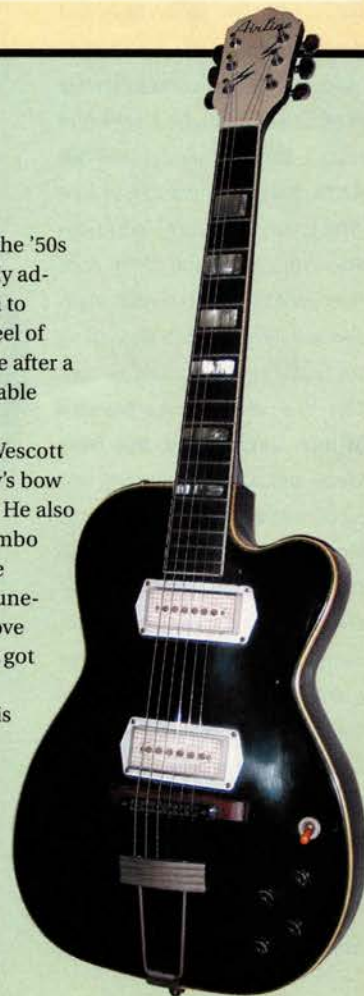
bow and very worn frets. You see, Kays from the '50s had an abysmal truss-rod system. You actually adjusted neck tension using a skate-key wrench to tweak a crazy cantilever mechanism at the heel of the guitar. Weird! The mechanism often broke after a few years, which rendered the neck unadjustable from that point on.



Thankfully, guitar tech John Wescott was able to take care of the Kay's bow problem by planing the neck. He also did a complete refret with jumbo frets—I wanted a Gibson-like feel—and installed a black Tune-o-matic-style bridge to improve the guitar's intonation. When I got the BK Pro back from the repair shop, I fell in love with it. The neck is

fast and easy to play, the body resonates nicely, and the sound is rich and warm. The total cost with a refret, new bridge, and shipping was \$625—a bargain for such a great guitar!

Will Ray can be contacted at [willr@hellcascasters.com](mailto:willr@hellcascasters.com). Be sure to check out his latest solo CD, *Mojo Blues* [Wild Rose Records].





## FRETWIRE

Though the WGC is still in the planning stages, a whole range of guitar styles will be represented, and events will include concerts, recitals, master classes, workshops, symposiums, exhibits, and receptions. For updates, check out [towson.edu/worldmusic-congress](http://towson.edu/worldmusic-congress). . . .

**QUEEN RETURNS:** British rock icons **Queen** performed April 30 at the Amsterdam Museumplein in honor of Holland's National Queensday—though the holiday is *not* in fact named for them. Performing only their second show as Queen since the death of singer Freddie Mercury in 1991, **Brian May** and **Roger Taylor** were joined by vocalist **Patti Russo** and a number of other musicians for a set full of classic Queen tunes. . . . **GIRLS KICK ASS:** The *It's About Eve* (Music for the Cure) compilation—released June 13 on Fore Reel entertainment—unites independent female artists supporting the battle against breast cancer. The album features **Deena Miller**, **Lava Baby**, **Ina May Wool**, and **Julia Greenberg**, and all proceeds will be donated to the **TJ Martell Foundation** and the **Libby Ross Foundation**—charities that benefit breast cancer research and outreach programs. A highlight of the compilation is **Joan Jett's** cover of the Beatles' "The Word," which features the *It's About Eve* band—**Leni Stern**, **Camille Gainer**, **Sara Lee**, and **Valerie Ghent**. For more info, check out [itsabouteve.org](http://itsabouteve.org). —EMILY FASTEN

## MY FAVORITE GUITAR PLAYER

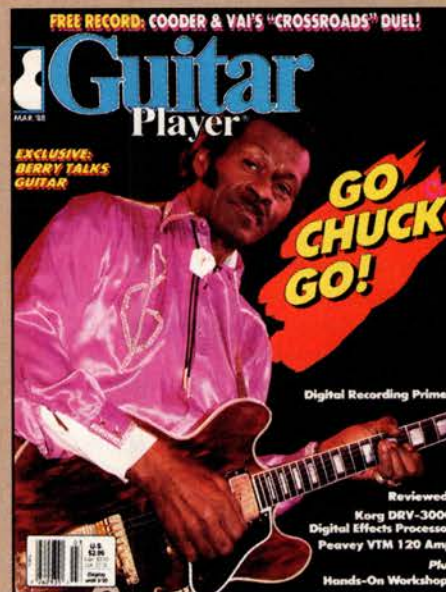
### Sonny Landreth



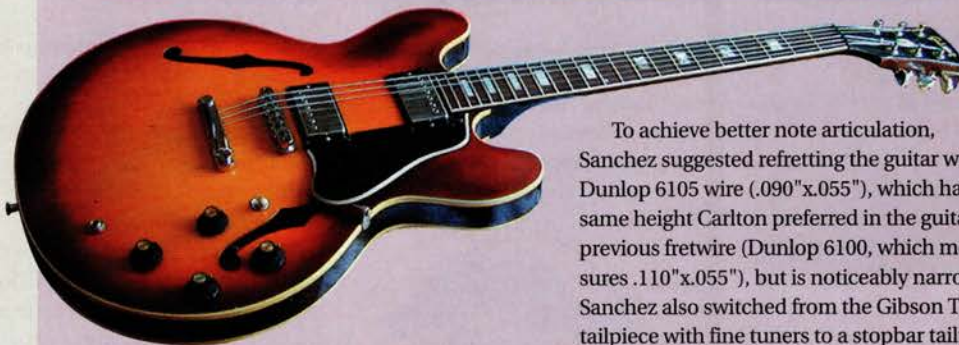
"It's hard to pick just one favorite *Guitar Player*, but the issue that comes to mind is March 1988, with the feature on Ry Cooder by Dan Forte—who also interviewed me for the following issue. Dan had a lot of insight in his interviews, and his article with Ry was very articulate.

"Ry is one of my biggest heroes because he's such an expert on blues. He knows just about every song, who wrote it, and how they played it. And his playing is so unique that it reached out to me through other players he influenced, such as Keith Richards.

"In the March '88 interview, Ry really opened up to show his perspective on roots music. I loved getting such deep insights on a player who never went the mainstream route. He has always taken the country road—the scenic route—and that really inspired me and helped me to believe in what I was doing." —SONNY LANDRETH, MAY, 2002



## SETUPS OF THE STARS Larry Carlton



Few players are as closely associated with a specific guitar as Mr. 335 himself, Larry Carlton. Recently, Carlton was inspired to give a little makeover to his mostly stock 1968 Gibson ES-335 after hearing clearer, more alive notes ring out from a much older 335.

Sammy Sanchez, Carlton's road tech (Joe Glaser babies Carlton's guitars in Nashville), believed years of dirt and oil build-up were deadening the tone of Carlton's prized ax, so he spent hours cleaning it with water and oil soap (which cuts through oil without damaging delicate surfaces).

To achieve better note articulation, Sanchez suggested refretting the guitar with Dunlop 6105 wire (.090"x.055"), which has the same height Carlton preferred in the guitar's previous fretwire (Dunlop 6100, which measures .110"x.055"), but is noticeably narrower. Sanchez also switched from the Gibson TP-6 tailpiece with fine tuners to a stopbar tailpiece, which he believed would contribute to a quicker, cleaner note attack by giving the string a more solid endpoint with fewer moving parts.

Carlton's 335 has a slight bit of relief in the neck, with the bass and treble strings an even 1/16" above the 12th fret. The graphite nut is cut so the strings lay .015" above the 1st fret.

The pickups are stock Gibson humbuckers. The neck pickup is 5/32" from the strings, and the bridge unit is 1/16" away. Years ago, the stock tuners were replaced with older-style Schallers. Carlton's strings are D'Addario XL140s, gauged .010, .013, .017, .030, .042, .052. —GARY BRAWER, [brawer.com](http://brawer.com)





## SONGCRAFT

### Michelle Shocked

**O**ne of the most evocative and downright ballsy songwriters around, Michelle Shocked is a fearless spirit who trusts the counsel of her heart. She's certainly not afraid to mess with convention—her tough, vibey Deep Natural [Mighty Sound] is accompanied by a dub version (Dub Natural) of her songs—and she's a ferocious blues shouter who can also unleash a voice so tender that it feels like a lover brushing a hand across your face. This is a musician who has earned the right to rant about honest songwriting. We all should listen.

—MICHAEL MOLENDRA

• • • • •

"Professional Nashville songwriters look down their noses at singer/songwriters," says Shocked. "They feel their motivations aren't pure—that they're seeking their own catharsis, when a true songwriter's job is to express the feelings of those who can't write their own songs. I take pretty strong issue with that, because it's basically an argu-

ment for the necessity of professional songwriters—people who are supposed to somehow channel the emotions and experiences of others and express it for them. Well, I think Top 40 radio is proof enough that 'pro' songwriters are doing a piss poor job of that!

"Those works aren't really songs, they're 'movies' that have been test-marketed to death. It's all about catch phrases and watering everything down to the lowest

common denominators.

There are no surprises, because a professional songwriter doesn't trust the natural ending to stories.

"An honest songwriter is on a quest for truth and beauty—and *that's* what makes a song great, even if it takes unexpected turns or the characters do things you don't approve of. Some writers assume they aren't conscious enough to get there, but there's a resonance that anyone can feel

when they're in the presence of truth and beauty. It's transcendent and ephemeral, but it's reality, as well. I think songs become universal because the writer captured a truth that's specific to *them*. Suddenly a door opens to listeners who don't even realize they've been on a search for truth or beauty—it's like, 'Zounds! I've discovered this for myself.' A catch phrase or facile hook is not a universal truth. Find something to *say!*"

"Tricks and rules steal all the magic and mystery from songwriting," says Shocked. "Those things are just designed to turn songs into cash machines."





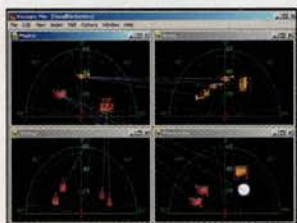
# New Gear

By Emily Fasten



## DIPINTO

The Los Straitjackets Galaxie model (\$649, pictured left, in the hands of Eddie Angel) has an alder body, a maple top, and a rosewood fretboard with dot inlays. It also features four DiPinto single-coils, volume and tone controls, a 5-position pickup selector, pearl-button tuners, and a floating tremolo. The Galaxie Custom (\$849, pictured center, in the hands of Danny Amis; Pete Curry holds the Galaxie Bass at right) comes with four on/off switches for each pickup, offering a total of 15 different pickup combinations. DiPinto Guitars, 631 N. 2nd St., Philadelphia, PA 19123; (215) 923-2353; dipintoguitars.com.



## 1. VOYAGER SOUND

The GraphiMix 01 (\$130) enhances the sound of MIDI-compatible hardware, and employs a user-definable on-screen "mix-surface" with images or icons that control individual sound elements such as pan, gain, and effects. Up to 16 MIDI-compatible audio mixers can be linked together, although they appear to the user as a single device. The GraphiMix is presently only

available for PC platforms. **Voyager Sound**, 95 Newton St., Weston, MA 02493; (781) 893-2574; voyagersound.com.

## 2. GROOVE TUBES

The GT6L6GE (two for \$90, four for \$180; singles available upon request) has been four years in the making, and follows Groove Tubes' 1998 purchase of the original materials and machines used to manufacture GE's 6L6. This faithful reissue is a beam tetrode, with a maximum output of 25 watts when used in a common class AB circuit, and is recommended for replacement of all 6L6-, KT66-, and 5881-type tubes. **Groove**



**Tubes**, 1543 Truman St., San Fernando, CA 91340; (818) 361-4500; groovetubes.com.

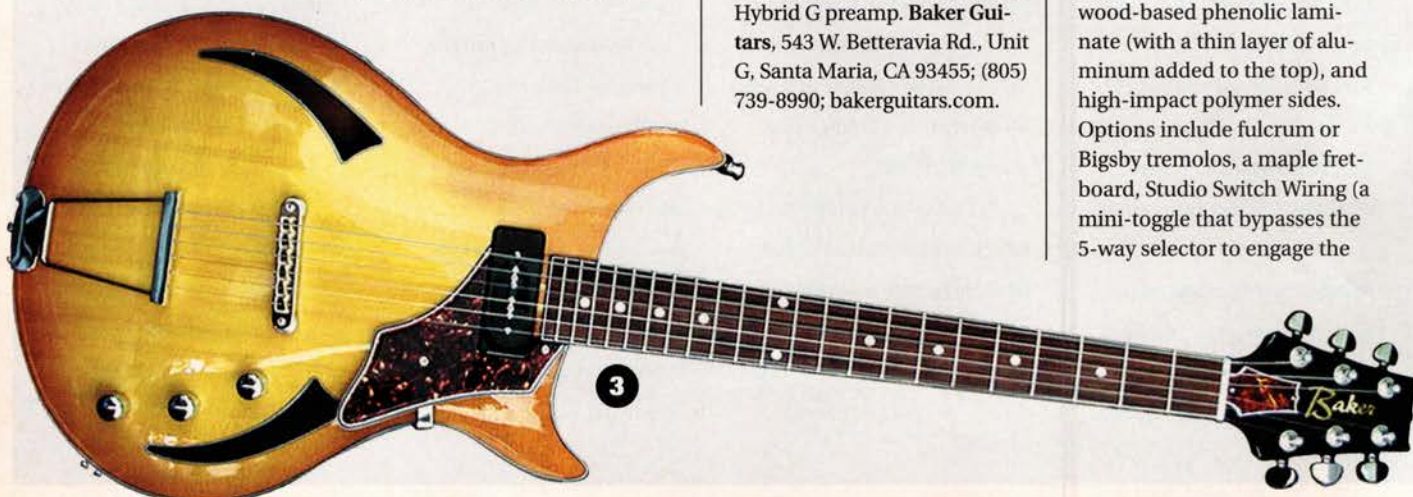
## 3. BAKER

The Jazz Cat hollowbody (\$4,785) is a hybrid electric/acoustic featuring a carved-spruce top, carved-cedar back and sides, two "Talon" soundholes, a TonePros System 2 bridge and trapeze tailpiece, and an ebony headstock with a gold and pearl-inlaid logo. The mahogany/maple-laminate neck features a rosewood fretboard, and electrified tones are courtesy of a custom-wound DiMarzio/Baker P-90 neck pickup. For acoustic tones, the Jazz Cat features RMC piezo saddles and a Hybrid G preamp. **Baker Guitars**, 543 W. Betteravia Rd., Unit G, Santa Maria, CA 93455; (805) 739-8990; bakerguitars.com.



## 4. REVEREND

The Reverend TL Avenger (\$649) has a Tele-style bridge pickup, Strat-style middle and neck pickups, a 5-way pickup selector, locking tuners, and a chambered body available in brushed, exotic, or sandblasted finishes. It also features a maple neck with a rosewood fretboard, a top and back of wood-based phenolic laminate (with a thin layer of aluminum added to the top), and high-impact polymer sides. Options include fulcrum or Bigsby tremolos, a maple fretboard, Studio Switch Wiring (a mini-toggle that bypasses the 5-way selector to engage the







## APHEX

The model 204 Aural Exciter (\$399) features Aphex's new Optical Big Bottom for enhanced low-end response. The processor has two independent channels, an internal power supply, and XLR and 1/4" input and output connections. **Aphex Systems**, 11068 Randall St., Sun Valley, CA 91352; (818) 767-2929; [aphex.com](http://aphex.com).



5

## 5. MORGAN MONROE

The Serenade (\$499) grand auditorium-style acoustic features a quilted-maple top, bubinga back and sides, and a rosewood fretboard and bridge. The guitar also offers 4-band active EQ (with 1/4" and XLR outputs), abalone inlays, gold hardware, and an MP-4 active pickup. The Serenade comes in natural, black, blue, and red. **Morgan Monroe Guitars**, 1922 W. Banta Rd., Indianapolis, IN 46217; (317) 780-0454; [morganmonroe.com](http://morganmonroe.com).

neck and bridge pickups), and a two-tone case. **Reverend Musical Instruments**, 27300 Gloede, Unit D, Warren, MI 48088; (586) 775-1025; [reverenddirect.com](http://reverenddirect.com).



## IK MULTIMEDIA

The AmpliTube RTAS plug-in for ProTools and VST platforms (\$399) uses 32-bit, floating-point processing to provide a wide spectrum of guitar tones via amp, effects, and post-effects modeling. The Amp module (pictured) lets you combine tones from seven preamp models, five EQ designs, four power amps, nine cabinets, and two microphone models, for a total of 1,260 configurations. Tremolo and simulated spring reverb are included. In addition, the Stompboxes module offers five effects (wah-wah, delay, chorus, flanger, and overdrive), and the Post FX module includes three stereo effects (3-band parametric EQ, stereo delay, and stereo reverb). **IK Multimedia**, Via Canalino 5, Modena MO 41100, Italy; 39-059-285496; [amplitude.com](http://amplitude.com).

able. The Rambler (\$2,195, not pictured) features class A circuitry, 28 watts of pentode power (14 watts in triode mode), a dual 6L6 output stage, reverb, and tremolo. All three versions feature Carr's newly designed grille cloth. **Carr Amplifiers**, 433 West Salisbury St., Pittsboro, NC 27312; (919) 545-0747; [carramps.com](http://carramps.com).

6

## 6. BLACK DIAMOND

New to the Black Diamond 477 series of electric guitar strings is the 477M (\$8.75), which offers longer string life and meatier tones via the .011, .014, .018, .028, .038, and .050 gauge. **Black Diamond Strings**, dist. by Cavanaugh Co., LLC, 1805 Apex Rd., Sarasota, FL 34240; (941) 379-9911; [blackdiamondstrings.com](http://blackdiamondstrings.com).



## 7. CARR

Carr's new trio of 1x15 combo amps incorporate 100 percent hand-wired circuits. The Imperial (\$2,595, pictured left) is a 60-watt, class A, cathode-biased amp with reverb, tremolo, footswitchable boost, and four Svetlana 6L6 power tubes. The 40-watt Slant 6V (\$2,480, pictured right) has two footswitchable channels (clean and crunch), 6V6 output tubes, and an output impedance selector (4Ω, 8Ω, and 16Ω). An 80-watt Slant 6V is also avail-

## 8. IBANEZ

Ibanez introduces two new stompboxes to its Tone-Lok series, which features controls that recess into the pedal housing to lock desired settings in place and protect the knobs from damage. The PM7 Phase Modulator (\$129, pictured) offers three different waveforms for effects that range from classic phasing to toy ray-gun mayhem. The AW7 Autowah (\$109) has standard wah sounds, an LPF setting that cuts only high frequencies, and built-in distortion.



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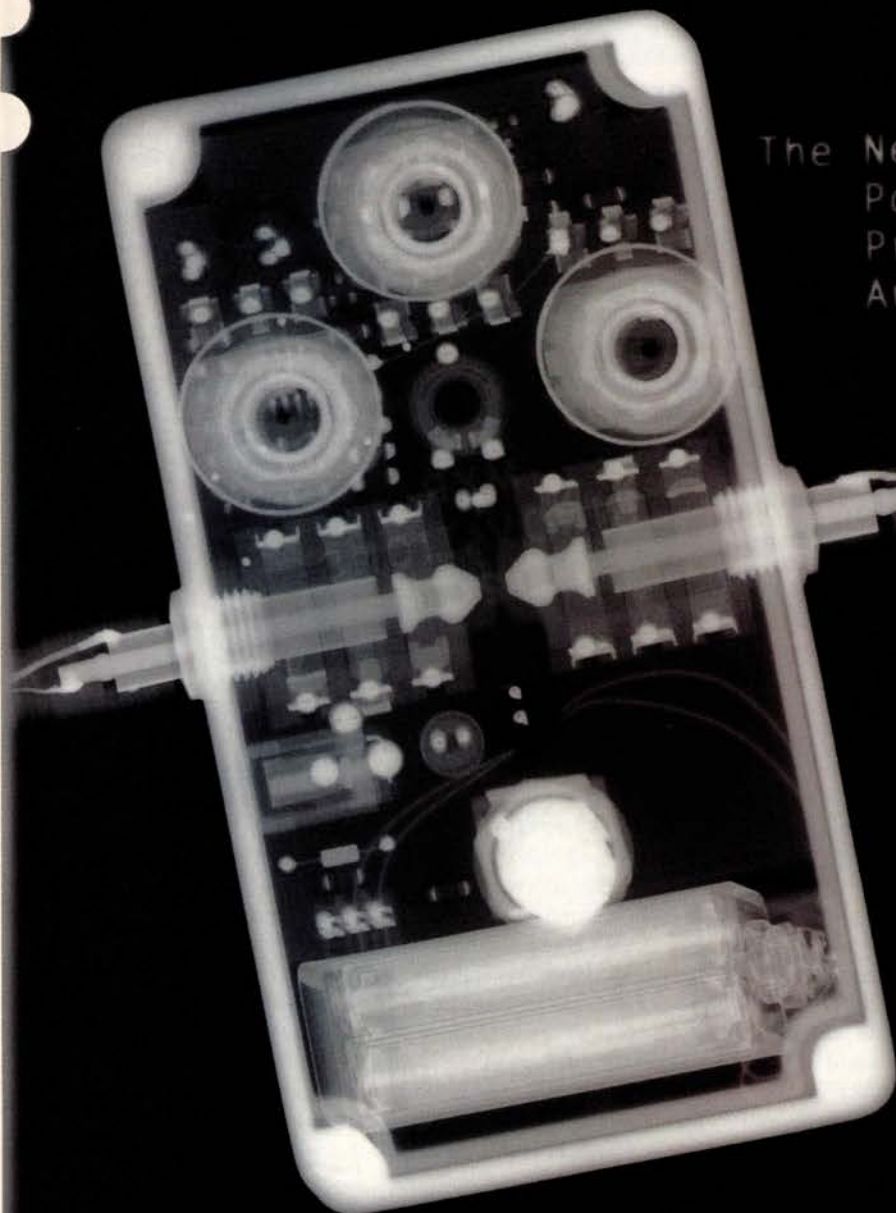
**Ibanez**, 1726 Winchester Rd., Bensalem, PA 19020; (215) 638-8670; [ibanez.com](http://ibanez.com).

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# Joe Satriani

Strangely  
Beautiful



"A Tele and an old Fender amp will always sound great," says Satriani. "But I applaud new guitarists playing new gear and going for new sounds. When people stop trying to be different, we're in trouble."

By Jude Gold

**W**hen Joe Satriani conceptualizes an album, he develops a list of themes to follow *and* avoid. For his new record, one of those parameters was "Don't get hung up on an album title." Instead, Satch decided to let the recorded performances determine what the title should be. Not surprisingly—at least to his rabid fans, with whom he interacts regularly through his Web site—the title of Satriani's eighth studio effort ended up as *Strange Beautiful Music* [Epic].

"I've been fascinated by the phrase 'strange, beautiful'—which



## Joe Satriani

I heard Jimi Hendrix say on 'Third Stone from the Sun'—ever since I was a school boy," explains Satriani. "And I always knew that, one day, one of my records would apply itself to those words. During the sessions for the new album, the songs 'Oriental Melody,' 'Belly Dancer,' 'Chords of Life,' and 'The Journey' had some real Jimi-type performances in there—that psychedelic-voodoo, electric-blues type of vibe. So the album became *Strange Beautiful Music*, and it gave me a feeling of coming full circle to have finally made that type of record."

And yet, in an ironic twist that would probably delight Hendrix, it's Satriani's stirring rendition of the 1959 jukebox classic "Sleepwalk" that *most* embodies the album's title. "The original version is an absolutely perfect instrumental," he says of Santo and Johnny's hypnotic masterpiece. "When you start playing it, the responsibility of not screwing it up comes down on you like a ton of bricks. The original melody was done on pedal or lap steel, but I wanted to figure out a way to play it on a conventional, fretted guitar."

Using a slide only for the song's trademark high notes, Satriani played the melody on Chrome Boy, his favorite Ibanez JS-1. But while the notes were correct, Satriani felt something

was missing. "It was beautiful," he says, "but it didn't sound *strange*. I found myself asking, 'Where's the weird part?'"

That's when an old friend came into the mix. "Robert Fripp was in town with King Crimson, so I invited him over," says Satriani. "He put down five tracks of sustained notes in his Frippertronics, soundscape kind of vein. Then I panned his parts left to right, and we were totally amazed. Suddenly 'Sleepwalk' had the atmosphere it needed—and he had just *winged* it."

Although Satriani recently upgraded his home studio with a Digidesign Digi 001 system, even he was surprised that many of his homebrewed guitar tracks made it onto the album. "I wanted to prove to myself that Pro Tools would help me capture great ideas as they happen—before I screw them up with 'better' ideas," he says. "But I never intended to keep the tracks, and, in fact, I expected them to reveal themselves as flawed. But every time we brought the tracks up, we went, 'Wow!' One reason they turned out so well was because I followed the advice of [producers] John Cuniberti and Eric Caudieux and didn't over-compress or add too much EQ. Plus, I didn't spend hours fussing with mic positions, because I ran my amps' speaker-out jacks straight into a Palmer Speaker Simulator. I also used a Millennia Me-

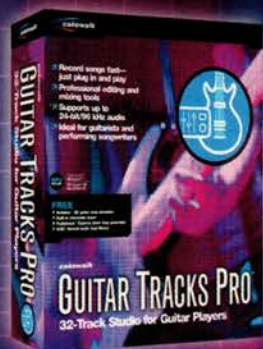
dia Origin microphone preamp—which is one of the greatest things I've ever plugged into—for 'Sleepwalk' and some other parts. You get an amazing sound just going direct."

Onstage, Satriani drives a Marshall 6100 head with a Boss DS-1 distortion pedal. And although he remains in love with his low-wattage Wells and Cornford amps for studio work, a Mesa/Boogie Triple Rectifier and an Ibanez 7-string make cameo appearances on *Strange Beautiful Music*.

"Seven String" was done on a JS-7 prototype I'm working on," says Satriani. "It's subtle, but there is still a 7-string revolution happening in guitar music, because other musicians have changed the way they relate to the guitar. For example, many drummers are tuning their kick drums higher, while bassists are tuning lower."

As always, the next step for Satriani is bringing his strange, beautiful music to stages around the world. "You focus on the audience, and they give you energy," he offers. "Stupid things will always happen—like when you step on the 'small' pedal when your guitar is supposed to get big—but you have to forge ahead and try not to let it affect the music. I have some nights that are truly awful, and I can't get a handle on anything. Other nights, I'll play so well it throws me off. I'll think, 'Hey, what's going on? I actually got it!'"

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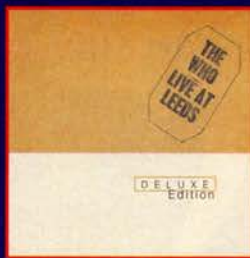
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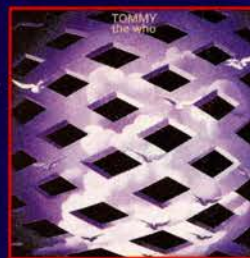
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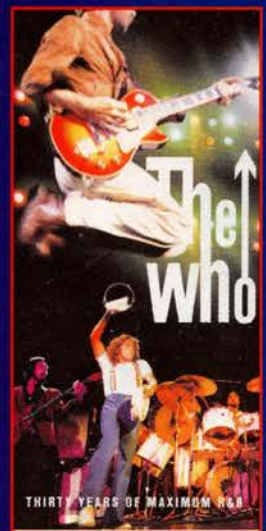
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# Joanna Connor

Slide Renegade

"I use my thumb and three fingers for that alternating bass thing," says Connor. "My pick is a .050 or .060 Dunlop—I can't get my rhythm happening with a small pick."

By Art Thompson

**T**he blues scene isn't particularly tolerant of artists who stray too far from the stylistic traditions laid down by Muddy Waters, B.B. King, John Lee Hooker, and other founding fathers. But that hasn't stopped Joanna Connor from pushing her blues cred to the breaking point by injecting funk, rock, rap, reggae, jazz, and even West African high-life into her sound. Wielding a blazing slide style and a powerful voice, Connor is well armed for the life of a blues outlaw. But her recent move to M.C. Records—and the release



## Joanna Connor

of *The Joanna Connor Band*—has finally given her a license to kill.

"My previous record companies were pretty focused on blues-rock," she says, "and that was frustrating because I'd hear all this music in my head that I could never put down on a record. Onstage, however, I've always played whatever I wanted. So when Mark [Carpentieri, of M.C.] came out to Chicago and saw my band, he got excited about making a record that represented what I do live. He even suggested I record War's 'Slipping into Darkness.' When I heard that, I thought, 'Wow, now I don't have to worry about being too funky anymore!'"

During a well-deserved break from her relentless touring schedule, Connor worked out the music for her most adventurous album to date. "I played 192 shows last year—and I have two kids—so I don't get a lot of time to sit down and write songs," she explains. "So when a couple of fans from Colorado invited me and my band to spend a week at their house in the mountains, I said, 'Let's go.' We set up in their living room, and we just relaxed and jammed. I wrote most of the original songs on the album during that time."

When Connor and crew hit the studio, they sailed through the sessions, recording a total

of 18 songs (14 appear on the album) in a mere day and a half. "We played everything live, except for the guitar solos and vocals," she says. "I'm used to doing three or four guitar parts all by myself, but, this time, I cut everything with my guitarist Anthony Palmer. He uses a very strange tuning—E, A, G, D, C, F—so he has his own way of playing chords, but we sound really big together. He played a lot of the melodic rhythm parts on the album, while I handled the staccato stuff."

Connor tracked most of the record using her trusty Gibson Les Paul Classic (strung .010-.046), though she relied on a reissue goldtop LP set up with heavier strings and a higher action for many of the slide solos. She played the acoustic lead on "Slipping into Darkness" on the studio's Gibson flat-top, and her amp of choice was the same Victoria model 80212 combo (a remake of the late-'50s high-power Fender Twin) she uses live.

"It not only sounds great, but it's very road-worthy," says Connor. "I've had that amp for five years, and it has never broken down. I just take it to the Victoria company once a year to have it retubed."

For the album, Connor derived her powerful distortion tone via a Marshall Bluesbreaker pedal, and she also used a Boss CE-1 chorus. Onstage, an ART Extreme pedal is added for

delay. Her slide was custom made by a motorcycle mechanic in Germany, who fashioned it from a Kawasaki's handle bar.

"I like metal slides because the glass ones are never heavy enough—heavier slides give you more tone," says Connor. "I wear it on my pinky, and I damp the strings with my middle finger and the side of my picking hand. About half the time, I play slide in standard tuning, and then I alternate between open A, D, and G. I usually have one guitar onstage, so I've learned to retune really quickly."

Though Connor cites Duane Allman, Jimmy Page, and Ry Cooder as primary influences, she holds a special place for Buddy Guy—with whom she regularly sat in with after moving to Chicago in 1984. "My mother took me to see Buddy in Boston when I was ten," she recalls, "so it was really something to get to play with him when I was 22 and just starting to play lead. Buddy is a great guitarist, and he's so charismatic. He knows how to command a stage, and how to play that *one* note with so much flair that everybody just steps back and goes, 'Wow.' Those things made a big impression on me, and I try to bring the same kind of intensity and emotion into my playing. You have to be fearless to get anywhere in this business, and if you can't get 'em with technique, get 'em with *attitude*."

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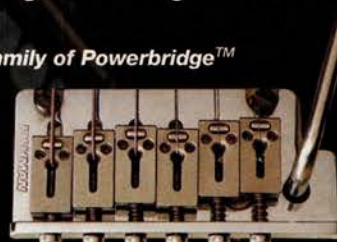
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"We want to break down musical boundaries and create a new standard for metal," says LaMacchia (right, Matthews is second from left).

# Candiria

## Miles of Metal

By Darrin Fox

"We're a metal band that listens to Miles Davis and the Mahavishnu Orchestra," says Candiria's Eric Matthews.

"Each guy in the band has strong individual influences," adds Matthews' partner in crime, guitarist John LaMacchia. "We're into jazz, hip-hop, ambient music, and other styles, but we find common ground in hardcore and metal. That's the music we collectively understand the best."

Candiria's ambitious two-CD release, *The C.O.M.A. Imprint* [Lakeshore Records] offers a revealing look into the Brooklyn, New York-based group's eclecticism. One disc consists of each member's side projects (everything

from electronica to ambient), and the other disc is Candiria doing what it does best—complex stop/start arrangements laced with odd time signatures, *Bitches Brew*-esque meditations, and cranium-crushing guitar riffs. Longtime Candiria fans may also notice that certain parts of *The C.O.M.A. Imprint* sound vaguely familiar.

"Some of the material is from an album we released in 1997 called *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*," explains LaMacchia. "The record wasn't distributed very well, and we were unhappy with the mix. So we went back, added some new performances, and remixed and remastered it. Plus, we changed the sequence of the record, and added a cov-

er of Method Man's 'Bring the Pain.'"

Candiria's unique sound isn't merely a product of wanton genre-blending, it's also structured around a freer sense of rhythm. "For this band, the *guitar* acts as the foundation and the backbone, rather than the bass and drums," explains LaMacchia. "Eric and I are essentially the rhythm section, which allows the bass and drums to explore polyrhythms and subtle nuances because they don't have to keep the groove grounded. I think *that* separates us from most bands more than our stylistic blends."

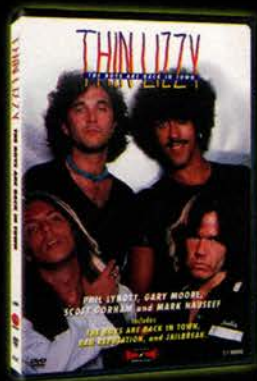
While the members depend on LaMacchia and Matthews to steer the rhythmic pulse, the two guitarists are not free to slather



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## Candiria

riffs all over the joint. Even though "R-Evolutionize-R" features a superb outro lead from LaMacchia, the band never leans on extended guitar solos to fill out its sound—which is somewhat surprising considering Candiria's propensity for epic song structures and improvisation.

"I'm not a jazz guitarist, and I don't want to be," says LaMacchia. "Eric and I have always been more interested in being heavy, rather than lifting off the groove to play long solos. If anything, playing with Eric has helped push my

**"We enjoy making people move," says LaMacchia.**

**"But we also like messing with the rhythms so much that they can't move."**

rhythm playing to new heights."

"John also brings in a lot of color and melody to our music—which is inherently hard-edged," chimes in Matthews. "My job was always the heavy thump. But over the years, John has started to pick up more of the thump, and I've been doing more color stuff. We've changed roles a little bit, and that has made us both grow as guitarists. That evolution is very important to us, because we're not metalheads for life, we're musicians."

For their musical role playing, both guitarists use custom Aslin Dane guitars loaded with Seymour Duncan Invader humbuckers. LaMacchia plugs into a 50-watt Marshall JCM 800 and a Celestion Vintage 30-loaded Ampeg 4x12. His only effect is a DigiTech RP21. Matthews uses a Marshall JCM 900 and a Marshall 4x12 cabinet, and his effects include a DigiTech RP7 and an RP20.

Although LaMacchia and Matthews revel in pushing the boundaries of metal, they take greater pride in exposing their fans to music they might otherwise turn a deaf ear to. "We mostly play to hardcore and metal fans, so when one of them comes up and thanks us for turning them on to Miles Davis, it's pretty amazing," says LaMacchia. "We want people to be open minded and realize that any type of music can be beautiful—from McCoy Tyner to a drum 'n' bass record. It's all good."

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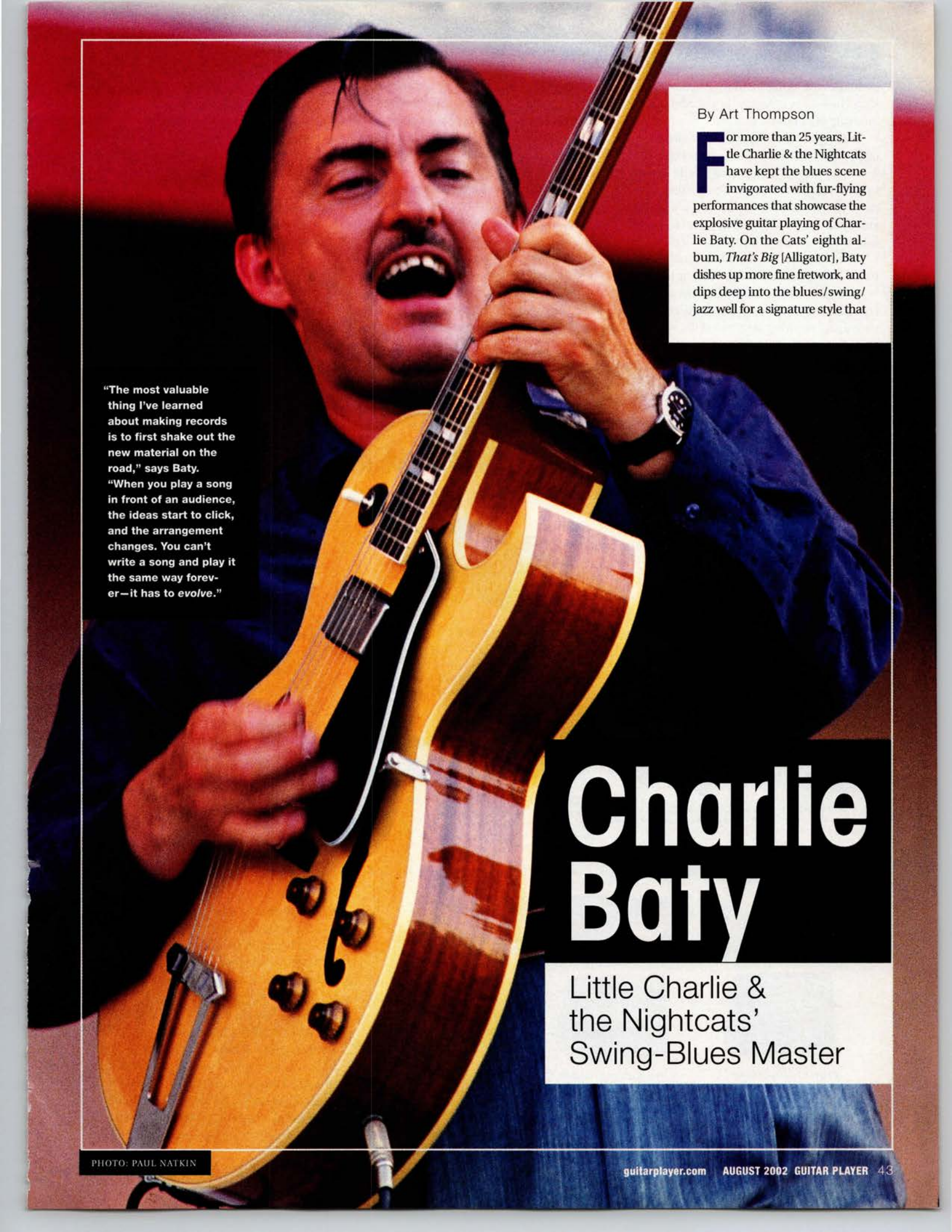
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By Art Thompson

For more than 25 years, Little Charlie & the Nightcats have kept the blues scene invigorated with fur-flying performances that showcase the explosive guitar playing of Charlie Batty. On the Cats' eighth album, *That's Big* [Alligator], Batty dishes up more fine fretwork, and dips deep into the blues/swing/jazz well for a signature style that

"The most valuable thing I've learned about making records is to first shake out the new material on the road," says Batty. "When you play a song in front of an audience, the ideas start to click, and the arrangement changes. You can't write a song and play it the same way forever—it has to evolve."

# Charlie Batty

Little Charlie & the Nightcats'  
Swing-Blues Master



## Charlie Baty

combines the string-bending emotion of B.B. King, the fluidity of Kenny Burrell, and the raw intensity of Albert Collins.

Baty began his career as a harmonica player, only picking up guitar to learn some classic blues licks to teach his 6-string playing friends. It wasn't until he and vocalist/harpist Rick Estrin formed the Nightcats in 1976, that Baty started playing guitar full time. "I knew a little about nothing," is how Baty describes his abilities at the time.

By 1982, when the Sacramento, California-based band released its debut album, *All the Way Crazy*, the members had become high-energy performers who used blues as a launching pad to explore swing, jazz, rockabilly, and even

gospel. "We wanted people to dance," says Baty, "so we did whatever we could to help round out our show. Back in the '80s, we were one of the few bands to mix Chicago-style blues with stuff that had more of a swing beat. We were going for an older sound at a time when a lot of guys were trying to be Stevie Ray Vaughan or the Fabulous Thunderbirds."

Though his multi-faceted style echoes T. Bone Walker, Buddy Guy, Luther Tucker, and Kenny Burrell, Baty cites jazz-guitar pioneer Charlie Christian as his primary influence. "Christian was sort of a Rosetta stone for me," he says. "He opened up my ears to phrasing, and he gave me ideas about making the jump between blues and swing. I didn't just cop his licks, though—I wanted to understand how he played

over the standards of his time. I can read music, and that helped me visualize what was going on harmonically with his solos. I've also studied [saxophonist] Charlie Parker's approach to solos, as compared to someone like Little Walter. They both play beautiful ideas, but they go about it in entirely different ways."

Baty's '57 and '66 Strats saw action on *That's Big*, but his top 6-string was a 1949 Gibson ES-5 equipped with three P-90s. "That was the first jazz guitar I owned, and it has this cool, western-swing kind of sound," he says. "When I bought it in the '70s, I was told it had been owned by a western-swing guitarist who lived in the Sacramento area. I like to think that might have been Junior Bernard [of the Texas Playboys]. A name had been inlaid on the original fingerboard, but it had been replaced with a plain ebony board when I got it."

Though Baty cut the majority of songs on the new album with his trusty Super Reverb amp, he also employed three vintage Fenders: a '55 Pro, a 1x15 Vibroverb (heard on "Money Must Think I'm Dead"), and a Vibrosonic (used for the overdubbed faux-Hammond-organ rhythm part on "Coastin' Hank"). "I don't haul those old amps out on the road," says Baty, "so getting to use stuff I *don't* play all the time is the fun part of making records."

Baty installs new-old-stock Phillips 6L6 output tubes in his Super Reverb, and he credits amp-tech Skip Henderson for showing him how biasing can affect tone. "My main Super is biased more like a Fender Pro," says Baty, "which gives it a thick distortion at a fairly low volume. I don't like to crank my amp up until it starts sounding like a fuzzbox. Also, I used to blow the old Jensen speakers in my Super pretty regularly, so I replaced them with a set of Eminence ceramic-magnet 10s. I've been using those speakers for quite a while now without any problems, and they have better bass response than the Jensens."

For road work, Baty relies on a Gibson ES-295, a pair of reissue Strats (a '57 and a '62), and a Fender Swingmaster (a Tele-style hollowbody with a bird's-eye maple top and three P-90s). A blackface Super Reverb is his main stage amp, but he occasionally uses a Vero Paramount 4x10 combo. His strings are fairly heavy—.011-.050 sets on the Fenders, and .012-.052 or .013-.056 sets on the Gibsons—and he uses heavy picks.

Playing some 200 shows a year leaves the Nightcats little time for recording, but when they *do* get in the studio, the band strives for a spontaneous live vibe. "I come up with my best stuff onstage," assesses Baty. "I've never been all that comfortable in the studio. It's hard not to feel the pressure of having to be creative right *now*. I don't like to overdub solos, so if I make a mistake, we do another take or I just live with it. After doing this for 25 years, I've realized that I'm never going to be as good as I'd like. All I can do is keep practicing and keep learning."

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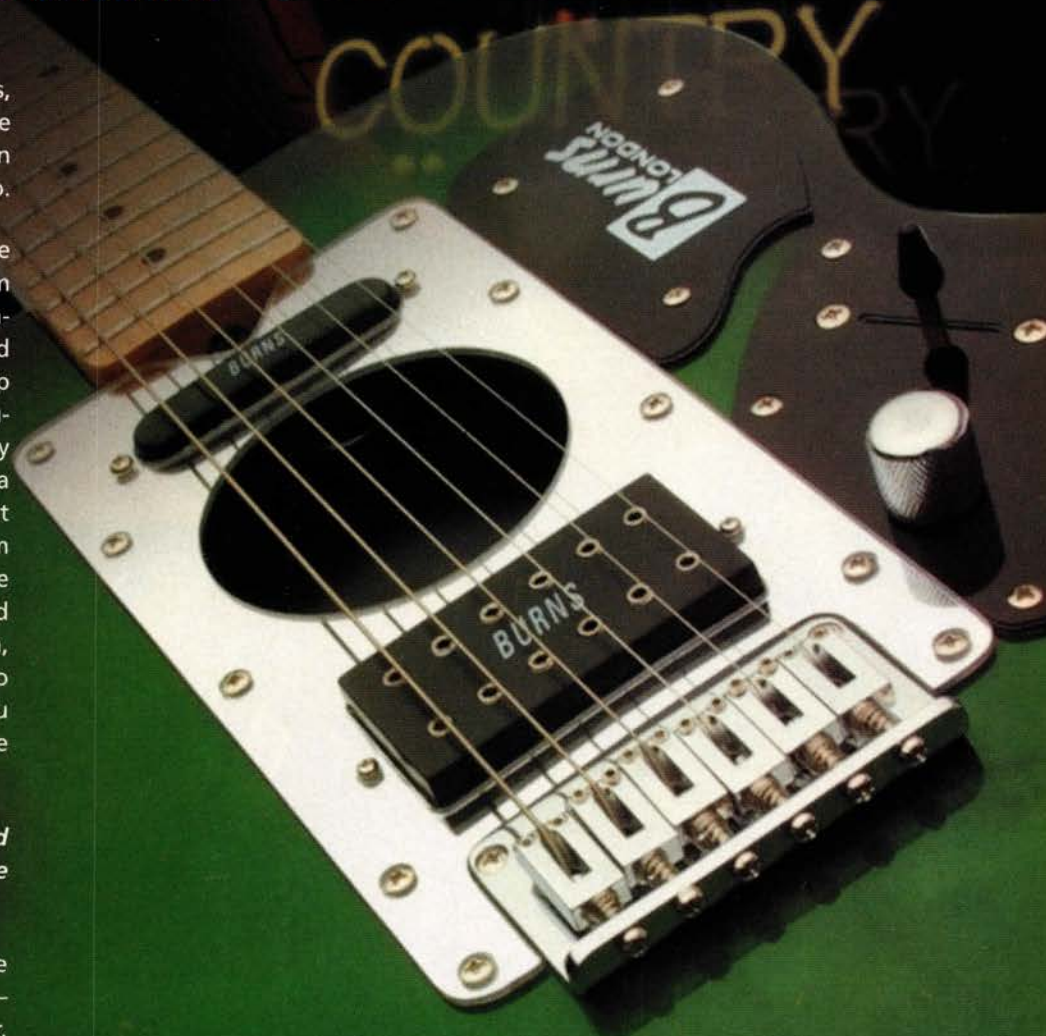
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# COMING OF AGE

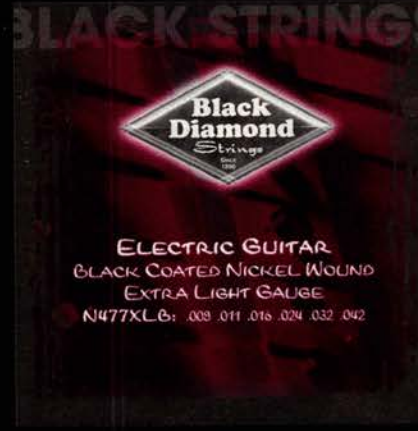
## Silverchair's Daniel Johns Stretches Out

"Our first record was written when we were 13 or 14 years old," says Daniel Johns, guitarist, singer, and chief songwriter for Australia's Silverchair. "So people have this image of me as a child songwriter cemented in their heads, and they aren't willing to let me grow up. But I don't want to be one of those young artists who puts out an album everybody loves, and then is forgotten when the novelty wears off." ● Johns is working hard to buck the "here today/gone tomorrow" trend. After three successful albums, he and his bandmates are set to release their most ambitious album to date, the lavishly arranged *Diorama* [Atlantic]. > > >

By Matt Blackett



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# COMING OF AGE

With its rich chord patterns, extreme dynamics, and lush orchestrations courtesy of Van Dyke Parks (of Beach Boys *Pet Sounds* fame), *Diorama* takes Silverchair to the next level and beyond.

It wasn't an easy journey. Since his mid-teens, Johns has dealt with detractors who found his brand of heavy rock to be calculated and imitative. In the face of that criticism, Johns showed poise beyond his years, and paid his dues on the road to hone his playing and writing chops. Now, a seasoned veteran at 22, he's finally making the music *he* wants to hear.



*Diorama is quite a departure for you. There's less guitar and more complex arrangements.*

I'm definitely trying to use the guitar more as a color, and less as the dominant instrument. I just got to the point where I wanted to progress and take my songwriting further. On our first album, we were really young, and we wanted to play music that was like what we listened to. As a result, it came off as derivative. Now, I really struggle to write music that sounds fresh and new to me. Every album we do is pushing closer to that goal, and I think *Diorama* is a huge step in that direction.

*Did the demos for the new tunes have all the orchestrations mapped out?*

No. I like to keep my demos pretty skeletal—like sketches or etchings. You can run into problems when you try to paint in full color at the demo stage, because you can spend the whole recording process trying to recreate something you threw down in your bedroom on an 8-track. I just like to get the basic idea down. Then, if there's a really important orchestral part, I'll put it down on keyboard, and mix it in the background. That way, I can hear what the arrangement is going to sound like without clouding the whole picture.

*Speaking of arrangements, how was it working with Van Dyke Parks?*

Absolutely amazing. It was one of the most mind-blowing musical experiences I've ever been a part of. I felt a really strong connection from the moment I first spoke to him. I tend to talk about music in metaphorical terms and most people don't get it—they think I'm a stoner. But he was immediately on my wavelength.

*What's an example of those metaphors?*

I like to describe music in colors. I'll refer to orchestral swells as tidal waves, violins as a flock of birds—that sort of thing. The point is, he took me seriously, and he knew what I was talking about.

*Parks only orchestrated three tunes, and yet the album sounds very cohesive.*

Johns laying down tracks with a lefty Fender Jazzmaster.



He did "Across the Night," "Tuna in the Brine," and "Luv Your Life." If listeners can't tell which songs he's on, that's a compliment. I really wanted the complexity of the arrangements to match up throughout the album—even if the instrumentation was different. In fact, there are some big orchestral moments where there's no orchestra—it's all guitar.

*"The Greatest View" has a lot of guitar in it. How did you get those tones?*

I played a '70s Rickenbacker 12-string through a 100-watt Soldano 2x12 combo. The clean track was the Ric into the clean channel of the Soldano with a Boss EQ pedal in front of the amp boosting the highs for more punch. I doubled the intro with the Ric/Soldano setup, but I added an Electro-Harmonix Micro-Synth.

*It sounds like the level of distortion varies throughout the tune. Do you track with different tones and then vary the blend in the mix?*

Occasionally, but I also tried to find tones that were incredibly sensitive to how hard I hit the strings. That way, I could control the distortion with my picking.

*"World Upon Your Shoulders" has some great clean tones. How did you track those?*

We worked really hard to create those sounds. The chords are pretty complex, and if

the tone wasn't incredibly clean, the subtle nuances would get lost. The intro is the Rickenbacker 12 with an acoustic 12-string under it. The verse is a '61 reissue Gibson SG—with the pickup selector in the middle position—through a Fender Twin. When the chorus hit, I added the Ric through the Soldano with the Boss EQ.

*What did you like about the Boss EQ?*

The tone was just too polite without it. Even though I'm playing through the Soldano's clean channel, I'm boosting it so much that it has a little distortion and a lot more brightness. That tone made the chorus bigger without resorting to the epic, power-rock, distorted-chorus thing.

*On the other hand, you obviously weren't concerned with keeping "One Way Mule" clean.*

No—I wanted that one to be really heavy. I didn't want it to sound like nu-metal, though. I wanted something fuzzy, indefinable, and a little Sabbath-y. The key to that tone was the tuning—it's traditional, but the low-E is down to B. I played a PRS McCarty through the Soldano, and I deliberately didn't modify the guitar because I wanted the low B to be flopping around a lot.

*What other tunings did you use on the album?*

My favorite one is what I call "violin tuning." I don't know what the actual notes are. I was



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## COMING OF AGE

mucking about one day, and I thought I had invented this amazing tuning. I was feeling all special until I showed it to a friend who told me it was tuned like a violin.

*A violin is tuned in fifths. Doesn't that make the top string really high?*

I actually tune the two highest strings down an octave. That gives the guitar an unusual resonance. The guitar is a Maton acoustic, but I play it through an electric amp. It's a really unique sound. It's not electric and it's not acoustic—it's just this cool tone that floats through the track. I can't get that sound with any other instrument.

*What songs did you play that guitar on?*

"Across the Night" and "Tuna in the Brine." On "Tuna," you can hear how the Maton feeds back. It's not a squealing feedback—it's more of a low humming that almost sounds like cellos. On certain tunes, the feedback sounded ridiculous so we would pad the inside of the guitar to get rid of it. Other times, it would happen spontaneously, and it sounded so great that we kept it.

*"Across the Night" sounds nothing like "One*

*Way Mule."* Do you have to get in a different frame of mind to write a heavy song as opposed to a mellow one, or could you write them both on the same day?

It's a totally different mindset. I wrote "One Way Mule" right after getting off tour, and I was still fired up from invigorating crowds with a full stack. I tend to write the heavier stuff right after being on the road. The longer I'm home, the further I move away from guitar-based tunes, and I get into writing more orchestrated songs such as "Across the Night."

*How much of the orchestrations will you try to pull off live?*

Most of them. We're touring with two keyboardists. One will play the strings and the horn parts, and the other will play piano.

*What gear will you bring on the road?*

Since 1996, I've been touring with two full stacks. Two 100-watt Soldano Hot Rod heads and four Marshall 4x12s. I get really bored with just one stack now [laughs]. When I hit a chord, I like the sound to push me into the microphone. For guitars, I'll bring two PRSs, the Rick-Enbacker 12-string, my Gibson SG, and the Maton acoustic.

*Will you play the Maton through two full stacks?*

Yeah. I'm a little worried about it getting out of control, but it's supposed to feed back all over

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## COMING OF AGE

the place, anyway. I've been padding it with foam, and that seems to help keep it in check.

*What stompboxes will you bring?*

I've got a Fuzz Face for when I need a note to sustain for about six minutes, and a Boss octave pedal to thicken up solos by dialing in just a little of the lower octave. I'll also bring the Boss EQ and the Micro-Synth, as well as a chorus pedal that I don't even use, but it has been there so long that I'm superstitious about getting rid of it.

*When Silverchair plays live, you guys have a really deep groove. Bands can play together for years and never get that.*

Grooves are something we're passionate about. I think when we first started out, we didn't know why certain shows didn't sound or feel as good as others. We would do a bad gig, and we couldn't put our finger on why. We've gotten a lot more aware of what makes a show good, and a lot of it has to do with the groove. We know now that we've really got to be able to hear one another clearly. If we can, we'll lock in.

*Did you ever play with a click or sequences?*

Not live. We're really against using DATs in

concert. I don't even like using those types of tools in the studio, because you can tell when a record has been recorded with a ton of sequencing and pitch correction—they sound really artificial. It's like making a baby without a heartbeat.

*Who would you cite as an influence on your rhythm-guitar playing?*

I'd say Jimmy Page. He's best known as a lead player, but his rhythm work had a profound effect on me when I was younger. I love his unusual chord selection and his use of extended chords. His acoustic stuff is amazing, too. I also like Malcolm Young.

*Who do you like for lead players?*

Definitely Hendrix. No one gives me goosebumps and shivers like he can. Some people play unbelievable solos, but they sound out of place. Jimi always felt right.

*What made you want to play guitar in the first place?*

My parents' record collection was pretty extensive, and I would scrounge around in there and whatever artwork appealed to me that would be what I put on. I gravitated toward *Deep Purple in Rock* and *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, and that's when I decided break dancing lessons were no longer an option. I wanted to play guitar. There are just magical things you can get out of a guitar that you can't get out of anything else.

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# Seance

A man with a goatee and sunglasses is playing a gold electric guitar. He is wearing a dark, patterned shirt. The background is a warm, reddish-orange color. The title "Seance" is at the top in a stylized, distressed font.

"I've always been proud of my Mexican heritage," says Rosas (right, Hidalgo is far left). "And I decided I was going to play that kind of music whether or not anybody else liked it."

BY SHAWN HAMMOND

Like many teenage guitarists in the early '70s,

David Hidalgo and Cesar Rosas idolized Hendrix, Page, and Clapton.

But they were also immersed in the Mexican folk music that permeated their East Los Angeles community. As members

of Los Lobos, such a diverse musical background has enabled

Hidalgo and Rosas to go from making grandmas weep at



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# Soul seance.

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But after three Los Lobos albums brimming with the experimental underpinnings of studio gurus Mitchell Froom and Tchad Blake, the band was itching to get back to traditional song forms. The result is *Good Morning Aztlán* [Mammoth]—an album crammed with tasty tones and stellar guitar work, and brimming with influences from soul to Latin folk music to Led Zeppelin.

\*\*\*\*\*

*What prompted you to switch producers for Good Morning Aztlán?*

**Rosas:** I decided that I wasn't going to work with Tchad and Mitchell anymore. It's nothing personal—I love those guys. But I thought, "I've been in the same room for a long time, and I wonder what's outside the door?"

*Was "opening the door" the reason for the return to more traditional song arrangements?*

**Hidalgo:** On the last couple of albums, the songs were based around a lot of grooves and casual, one-chord arrangements—and even non-arrangements. We felt we had taken that approach as far as we could, and we decided it would be cool to just write songs—tunes with traditional chorus and bridge forms. We hadn't done that in a long time.

*How would you say Aztlán producer John Leckie most affected the overall feel of the record?*

**Hidalgo:** I think the album sounds a little more mainstream. When we were with Mitchell and Tchad, we'd goof off and experiment with sounds and see how far we could take the production aspect. John tends to focus on the songs.

*Does the band track live?*

**Rosas:** Not typically. Sometimes it's important to play with three or four of us at a time, but we mostly overdub our parts.

*What was the recording medium for the album?*

**Rosas:** Most of it was recorded at my home studio the old-fashioned way—through a Neve console to 24-track, 2" analog tape.

*What's your favorite song on the new album, and why?*

**Rosas:** "María Christina," because it's the first time we've ever recorded a cumbia—a style of Columbian folk music that has a steady, Caribbean-type backbeat similar to reggae. That was the first song we recorded, and it set the mood for the rest of the album. I like the skanky, upside-down-and-sideways guitar lines.

**Hidalgo:** My favorite is "Big Ranch." That



## Discovery Quest

As kids, Hidalgo and Rosas developed a deep love of Mexican folk music through their parents' record collections. "We heard a lot of Latin music from albums, but we didn't know what instruments the musicians were using or how they were played," Hidalgo explains. "We could go and see bands performing the norteña style—Tex-Mex stuff with accordion—around Los Angeles, but the music from further south rarely made it up here."

By 1975, the band was so serious about representing their culture through music that they embarked on a bus trek to the heart of Mexico. Stopping in towns along the route from Tijuana to Mexico City and Veracruz, Rosas and Hidalgo downed beers and fresh fruit in town plazas as strolling bands played music from all over Central and South America.

"Three guys would carry up a big old marimba, park it, and play these amazing songs," Hidalgo remembers. "After they moved on, a trio of maracas, guitar, and tres would come by and play tropical music. Then a jarocho group would come and play harp, requinto [a small-bodied Spanish guitar tuned a fourth above standard], and jarana [a guitar with five courses and eight strings]. There were also mariachi groups, and big bands playing danzon music [a Cuban folk-dance style]. The journey was unbelievable, and it put us in touch with the soul of Mexican music."

"We learned we weren't too far from the correct playing techniques," adds Rosas, "but we also saw that our strumming approach was off. We'd be playing these parts where you go slap, down, up, down, down. But we found out it was one guy playing all the slaps, while the other player did the ups and downs. Before we saw that, we were both trying to do it all, and it didn't sound right."

While educating the band about traditional Latin instruments—which the players often incorporate into Los Lobos' music—the trek also served to fire up Rosas and Hidalgo's approach to guitar technique and songwriting. "Playing Mexican folk music really helped my guitar playing overall," says Hidalgo. "It taught me how to play over chord changes—how to follow them, how to lead them in, and how to anticipate the next one. It also got me into playing a lot of double-stops with thirds and sixths. I started practicing those in every key, which improved my improvisation."

"More than anything," asserts Rosas, "playing Latino music has influenced our writing and arranging. The foundations of a lot of our songs are built on the spirit and rhythms of traditional Mexican music."

—SH



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## SOUL SEANCE

tune turned out sounding somewhere between Jimi Hendrix and The Band. For the solo in the middle, I used a Travis Bean guitar through a Line 6 FlexTone 2x12. Louie [Pérez, drummer and guitarist] did the last solo with the same setup.

*How about favorite guitar tones?*

Rosas: "The Word." As far as I can remember, that's the first time we've used a Spanish guitar for a lead in a rock tune. We typically use them as backing instruments. For the electric parts, I played a stock '69 Telecaster through my old CryBaby wah and a little direct box, and plugged straight into either an API or a Neve preamp.

*"The Word" has a deep R&B feel—sort of a Stax/Volt-meets-Curtis Mayfield vibe.*

Rosas: I listen to a lot of soul, and I think I pushed that influence on Dave. He loves Curtis Mayfield, but he got away from that feel, and I brought it back to the band. When Louie and I wrote "The Word," I was hearing the spirit of Marvin Gaye. In fact, for about five months the working title was "The Marvin Gaye Song," and I kept pushing it to sound like him.

*What was your favorite tone, David?*

Hidalgo: I like the tone on the ending solo of "Done Gone Blue." I used a '61 Gibson ES-330 with a P-90 pickup through a Tech 21 Trademark 60 amp driving a Marshall 4x12. Afterward, the engineer added the Uni-Vibe model from a Line 6 Modulation Modeler. I used the Trademark/Marshall setup for most of the album. I also like the rhythm guitars on "The Word" and the solo on "Maria Christina." For that solo, I used a '66 Fender Telecaster with the bridge pickup wide open.

*"Done Gone Blue" has a bit of an SRV feel to it.*

Hidalgo: That's funny. I was thinking Coda-era Zeppelin when we did that song—even though it doesn't really sound like it. Something about playing a 7th chord up high like that reminded me of Jimmy Page. One of the fun parts about that song was playing a reissue Danelectro Longhorn bass with a 50-cent piece as a pick.

*Considering your cache of vintage tube amps, it's surprising to hear solid-state models were used so much.*

Hidalgo: Well, tube amps were still in the studio. I used a Fender Princeton Reverb and an old White amp for a couple of things. But as I got more into doing home-studio stuff, I started using the Tech 21 SansAmp PSA-1 rack-mount. At first, I just used it as a noisemaker, but then I looked at the manual, and it detailed

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# SOUL SEANCE

knob settings for an early-Beatles Vox AC30 sound. So I dialed in those settings, strummed a chord, and it was like, "Wow, that's George Harrison!" It was right on the money. Then I tried the Bluesbreaker-Clapton setting, and—boom—it was there. For direct sounds, I used the PSA-1 or a Morley JD-10 Jerry Donahue Over-drive/Distortion direct box.

**Rosas:** On about half the stuff, I went direct, and on the other half I used a Top Hat Club Royale 1x12 combo. That's a pretty cool amp—it lets you get a really rich clean tone, but you can get a lot of different flavors out of it because the midrange is so flexible. The English-type sounds have been my favorite for the last ten years, though. As much as I can, I use Marshalls, Voxes, and Oranges.

*It's even more surprising how often you went direct.*

**Rosas:** You can get some really cool sounds going direct—a lot of the old records were done that way. Remember the intro to the Temptations' "My Girl"? I spent 35 years trying to find out how they got that tone! When I

started learning about Motown guitarists, I found out they *never* used a guitar amp—they always went direct.

*When you did use amps, how did you usually mic them?*

**Rosas:** The Shure SM58 is John Leckie's favorite mic, and he really knows how to get great sounds with it. We usually placed it about halfway between the dust cap and the edge of the speaker. A couple of times, I was able to use my favorite mic—a Sennheiser MD 441.

**Hidalgo:** I used a Shure KSM44 condenser and an SM57. For room ambience, I used a Neumann U87.

*What other gear did you use on the album?*

**Hidalgo:** I used a Gibson ES-330 on a few things. On "What in the World," I used Louie's mid-'60s Gibson ES-175. I also used an ES-345. On "Hearts of Stone," I used a '66 Epiphone Riviera. I string the guitars with Ernie Ball .010-.042 sets. I used to use .011s, but I started getting tennis elbow.

**Rosas:** The Tele was my main guitar, but I also used a mutt Strat that has mostly '68 parts—including the pickups. I used a '62 Fender Jazzmaster on "Maria Christina," and a '61 Gibson SG Standard with Gibson reissue P-90s on "Get to This." On "What in the World," I went direct with a Gibson L-5. I string all my electrics with Ernie Ball .010 sets, and I use heavy Ernie Ball picks.

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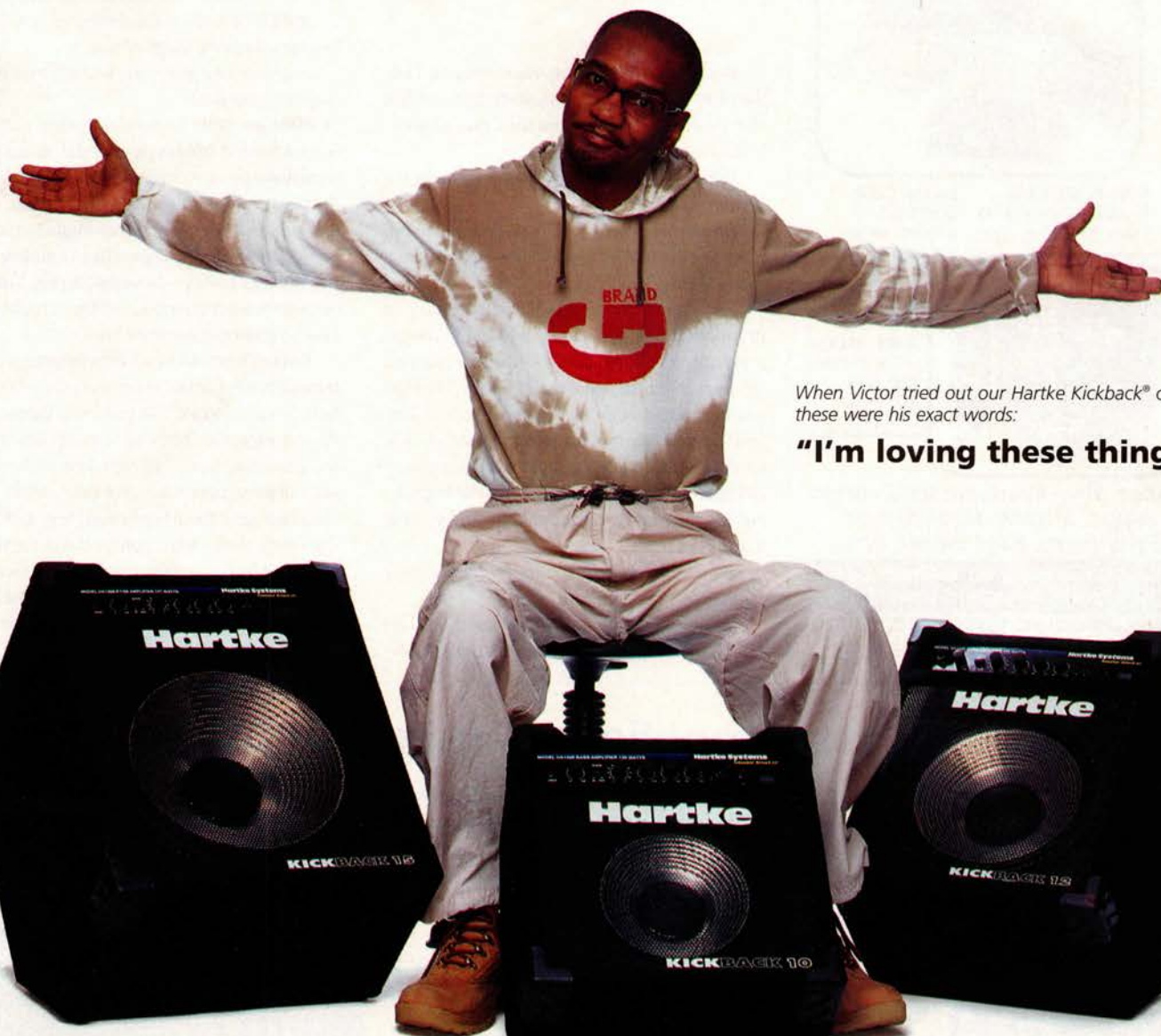


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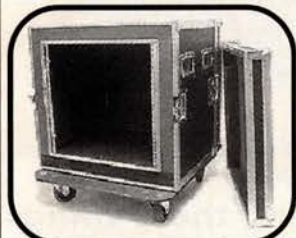


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# Soul seance

*How about effects?*

**Rosas:** I didn't use many. For chorusing, I like the DOD FX65. They don't make it anymore, but that was the greatest pedal they ever made—it's like a poor man's Leslie.

*What types of acoustics were played on the sessions?*

**Rosas:** On "Malaque," I used a Peruvian cuatro, and on "The Word," I used a Rodriguez nylon-string.

**Hidalgo:** Louie used a Martin 000-18 in dropped-D tuning on "Tony & Maria." I played a jarana, a cuatro, and a requinto jarocho through a vibrato pedal on "Malaque." For the middle part, I also used a Danelectro Convertible that I turned into a homemade tres [a small, 6-string Cuban guitar with three courses tuned in octaves to G, C, E, low to high] by cutting the nut with a butter knife and putting a different bridge on it.

*What do you admire about each other's playing?*

**Rosas:** Dave's technique is great, and he has an incredible sense of rhythm that I'll nev-

er have. I try and try, but I can't match it.

**Hidalgo:** Cesar is great at rhythm, too, but he's more of a raw player. When he plays blues and rock he's very aggressive—he goes for the throat. He has also taught me a lot about boleros [ballads] and soul and R&B rhythms. I love his little pull-offs and the two-note slides he does on those kinds of tunes.

*Are there any guitarists you dig that might surprise your fans?*

**Hidalgo:** Well, Kurt Cobain may not have been schooled, but his solos and rhythms parts were really musical. Even though he didn't have the kind of technique other guitarists did, there was *substance* to it—and that made him stand apart. Then you've got guys like Dimebag Darrell, who's a *monster*—I love his playing. The way he plays is so deliberate, and that's hard to do. I also dig Kerry King from Slayer.

**Rosas:** I'm so out of it—I'm embarrassed and ashamed. For the last couple of years, I haven't bought any records. I've just been listening to Wes Montgomery because I haven't heard anything recently that's different. I get really bored with all these bands full of upper-middle-class kids screaming about how awful life is, and I *hate* the deep, dark, devil voices that everybody uses now. It makes me mad, because I want to hear somebody unique. I know there's a lot of talent out there, it's just hard to find. Maybe I should stop watching MTV!

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*"This record just took on  
a life of its own," says  
Lifeson, shown here with  
his '76 Gibson ES-355.*



# Back in the Limelight

**ALEX LIFESON AND RUSH REIGNITE  
AFTER A FIVE-YEAR HIATUS**

W

**BY SHAWN HAMMOND**

hen Rush emerged from the Great White North in 1974, the band was two-thirds of the way to becoming one of hard rock's most groundbreaking and successful acts.

Just prior to their first full U.S. tour that year, guitarist Alex Lifeson and bassist/vocalist Geddy Lee

recruited drummer/lyricist Neil Peart to cement what would also become one of the longest-

lived and most-virtuosic trios of all time. ■ The band's unique style spawned a string of radio ▶ ▶ ▶

**PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MacNAUGHTAN**



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# Back in the Limelight

classics (including "Fly by Night," "Closer to the Heart," "The Spirit of Radio," and "Tom Sawyer"), and allowed them to weather every fad from '70s riff rock to '80s synth mania to '90s grunge. But shortly after the last date of their 1997 *Test for Echo* tour, the band's career was put on indefinite hiatus after the tragic deaths of Peart's daughter and wife. As befitting longtime friends, Lifeson and Lee made Peart's emotional well-being priority one, and left it up to him to decide when—and if—Rush would resume work.

Early in 2001, the band members settled into a small Toronto studio and proceeded to work on their 17th studio album, *Vapor Trails* [Anthem/Atlantic]. Much to the delight of Lifeson—and fans of his guitar work—the record is completely devoid of keyboards, which freed him to strap on approximately 50 guitars and lay down track upon track of what may be his most rabid and experimental playing ever.

*When was the last time you guys played together before Vapor Trails?*

July 4, 1997. After that, I saw Ged a fair bit, but he was busy working on his solo record. With Neil, it was a little more difficult. He was searching for answers and embarking on a new life. We kept in touch, but it was from a distance. Finally, Neil felt he was ready to refocus, so we went back into the studio. It has been a long recovery for everybody, but getting into the studio was terrific therapy for all of us.

*Did you play guitar much during the band's time off?*

I didn't pick up a guitar for about a year after [Peart's daughter] Selena's death. I couldn't find any joy in playing. But I slowly came around to finding solace in it as I spent more time in my home studio, writing and jamming with friends just for the fun of it. I also did a lot of recording with my son, who plays techno stuff on keyboard. Doing that helped me stay in shape—musically and mentally. It also gave me a chance to experiment. I got involved with some other projects, too. I produced some songs for 3 Doors Down, and I did some soundtrack work for a TV show called *Andromeda*. Af-

ter Geddy finished his record, I took a gig producing a band called Lifer [covered in the Oct. '01 GP]. A couple of months after that, we started on *Vapor Trails*.

*What were those first few sessions like?*

We didn't play anything for two or three weeks. We just sat and talked, and got a feel for each other's frame of mind. We needed to see if everybody was really up for it. Eventually, we started jamming, but we didn't have anything we were crazy about. The material seemed a little forced—nothing grabbed us. So we took a couple of weeks off, and when we came back, we felt fresh and more focused, and we were able to hear songs, not just parts.

*Had your tastes drifted apart during the interim?*

Not really. In the beginning, it was difficult to find common ground in terms of direction. I had just come off projects that were aggressive and youthful, and Geddy's record was quite melodic. So we had to figure out what kind of record we wanted to make. But, after spending those weeks talking about what we wanted out of it, we were in agreement on every aspect of the recording. And when we finally started jamming, we were really feeding off each other. A lot of stuff on the album is from those

*Lee (right) looks on as Lifeson wails on his '69 Gibson ES-335, circa 1977.*





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# Back in the Limelight

jams—the original, played-once versions.

*What's an example of a song that came from those first jams?*

The heart of the album—including “Peaceable Kingdom,” “Ceiling Unlimited,” and “Nocturne”—came from early jams. For “Peaceable Kingdom,” we just assembled the pieces and enhanced a couple of things. We added another clean guitar in the chorus, beefed up the middle section, and that was it. There are moments on all the songs that are from the original jams. I don't think there was one song that was completely re-recorded.

*How did your writing and recording approach change with this project?*

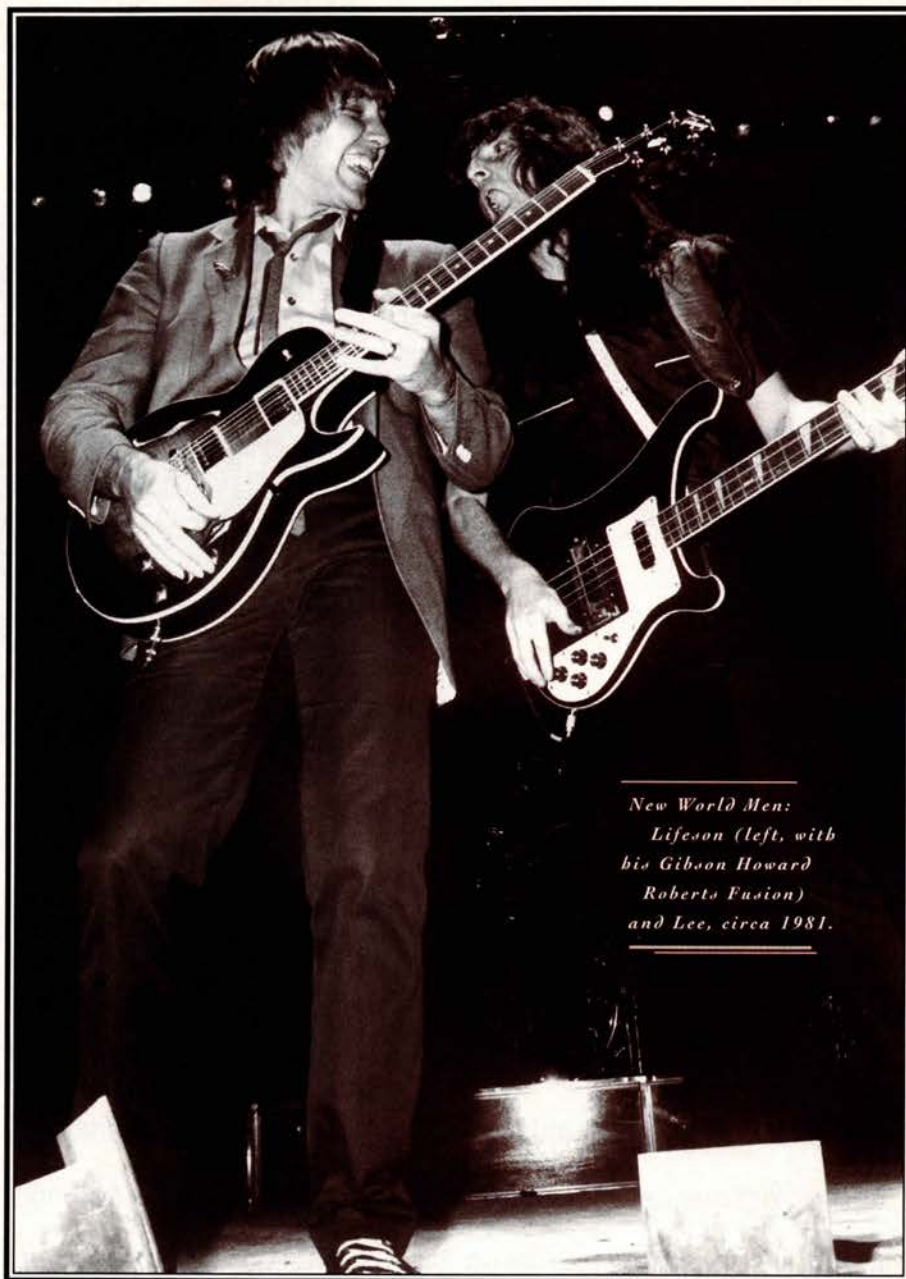
We used to take five or six weeks to write and do preproduction demos, and then we'd go into the studio and record everything all over again. In addition, each of us would bring in song ideas as starting points. But we found over the last couple of records that it's a lot more fun to come in the first day and start fresh. We wanted this album to be completely disconnected from anything we've done before, so there were no preconceived ideas. We wanted to capture the spontaneous, instinctive, emotional stuff that often gets lost when you do it the other way.

We spent a little time making sure we had good sounds, and we hit record. If we thought we could beat any of those first performances, we'd do the song again. If not, we knew we had something special. There's a magic created in those types of moments—a real spark—that's difficult to recapture.

Another difference is we used to be obsessive about deadlines. We'd allot a certain amount of time to record each instrument, and we wouldn't budge from those schedules. For *Vapor Trails*, we left things open-ended—which took off a lot of the pressure and allowed us to not be precious about anything. That might not sound like a big deal, but, for us, breaking out of the deadline mold was a big move—and we ended up constantly tweaking all the songs.

*The lack of keyboards on this album certainly allowed you to stretch out on guitar.*

Leaving keyboards off this record was very important to me, and Geddy was open to that because he knew that I'd often worried about their presence in the band. So I spent a lot of time working on guitar parts that were richer in tonality and harmonic quality, and that satisfied our needs for the background stuff that synths would normally provide.



*New World Men:  
Lifeson (left, with  
his Gibson Howard  
Roberts Fusion)  
and Lee, circa 1981.*

*There is a new intensity in your playing.*

My playing has taken on a different character, but I don't know how I would explain it. These days, I think of myself more as a songwriter than a guitar player. I've always been very proud of the fact that this is my main instrument—and I love playing it. But when I pick up the guitar now, I don't play scales or little riffs. I look for parts that give some immediate emotional payback. I seem to have reached a point where I really crave writing song parts.

*Does that mean you're more tuned into chords and rhythm work?*

Yeah. On *Vapor Trails*, I played chords and let all kinds of open strings ring out, whether they were in key or not. I didn't care—it was more about the effect of the sound than the neatness of the notes. Having said that, Ged played a lot of chords on bass, and that opened

up a different area for me, because it let me play more single-note lines.

*How did you get that uncharacteristically dry and dark overdrive at the beginning of “Ghost Rider”?*

I used my '69 Gibson ES-335 through a Hughes & Kettner TriAmp. The next time I played that part, I used my '76 ES-355. We were looking for this bluesy, melancholy nightclub feel. Something like that never would have appeared on a Rush record in the past—it's bare and raw, and there's nothing sophisticated about it. For the opening clean part, I played my 1981 Gibson Howard Roberts Fusion, and in the bridges I used a '59 Tele reissue from 1978—which has been my main writing and recording guitar ever since I bought it. In the choruses I played a '95 Les Paul Custom and the 335.

*Continued on page 76*





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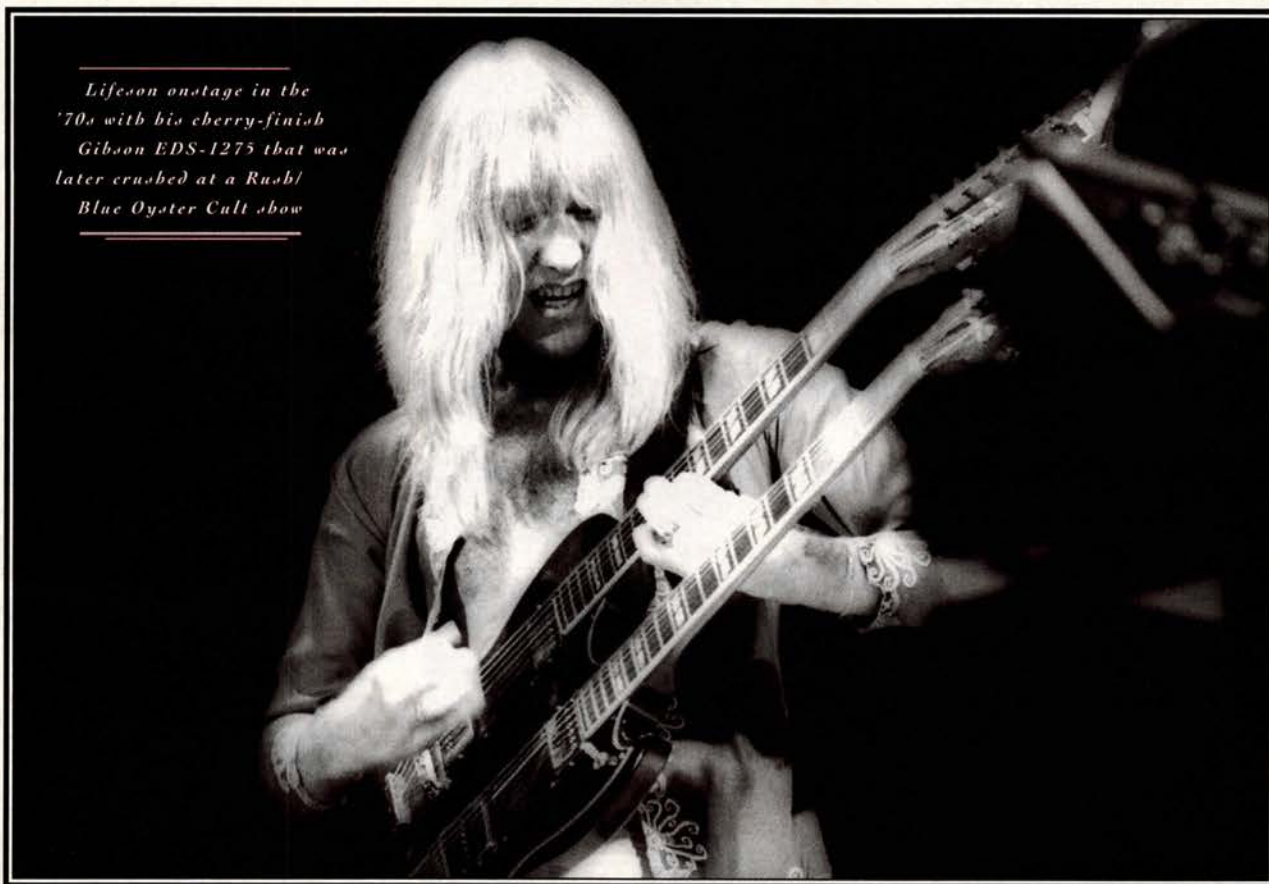
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# The Lifeson Chronicles

*Lifeson onstage in the '70s with his cherry-finish Gibson EDS-1275 that was later crushed at a Rush/Blue Oyster Cult show*



## THE GUITARIST'S VIEW OF RUSH'S FAMOUS TUNES

BY MATT BLACKETT

A

lex Lifeson began playing in Rush more than 30 years ago. In that time,

he has played on several platinum records, performed countless sold-out tours,

and won the Best Rock Guitarist category in the *GP* Readers' Poll.

Here, he details the gear, technique, and creative concepts that produced some Rush classics. ▶ ▶ ▶



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## The Lifeson Chronicles

### "WORKING MAN"

RUSH [1974]



"We tracked the entire first album in two days. We would play a bar gig until 1 A.M., load our gear into the studio, record until the studio opened at 8:00 A.M., and then tear the gear down and take it back to the bar. For 'Working Man,' I played my 1969 Gibson ES-335 into a rented Marshall 50-watt head and a 4x12 slant cab. We all tracked together, and I laid down my rhythm parts in one take and then doubled them."

### "FLY BY NIGHT"

FLY BY NIGHT [1975]



"We recorded *Fly by Night* in five days—more than double the time of the first album—so it felt leisurely to us, although that's barely a lunch for Mutt Lange [laughs]. For the rhythm lines in the title track, I played my 335 and doubled it with a Strat. The tone was a blend of a 50-watt Marshall and a direct feed into the console. That was [producer] Terry Brown's idea. He did that from time to time on all our records, and it gave the guitar tone this cool quality that's clean beyond clean. The solo was an overdub with the 335 plugged into the Marshall."

### "PASSAGE TO BANGKOK"

2112 [1976]



"This album took just over a week to record. Most of it was written on the road, and we rehearsed the material during soundchecks. For 'Passage to Bangkok,' I played the tobacco sunburst Les Paul that's pictured on *All the World's a Stage* into a Fender Super Reverb."

### "CLOSER TO THE HEART"

A FAREWELL TO KINGS [1977]



"We didn't really have any sense that 'Closer to the Heart' would be a big hit for us when we were tracking it. I remember cutting the intro at about five or six in the morning with a Gibson B-45 acoustic 12-string, a Gibson Dove acoustic 6-string, and an ES-355 through a Fender Twin. The dirty stuff was a blend of the Twin and a Hiwatt. The solo breaks into blocked-fourth harmony in the middle, and I did that as an overdub—no harmonizers were used."

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### "XANADU"

A FAREWELL TO KINGS [1977]

"'Xanadu' was recorded in one take—and it was the first take—with the whole band. When we did that, the engineer was dumbfounded. 'How can these guys knock out a 12-minute tune in one take?' But that was the kind of preparation that was important to us then. I played my Gibson EDS-1275 doubleneck into a Roland JC-120. The solo was the 1275 into a 100-watt Hiwatt."

### "THE TREES"

HEMISPHERES [1978]



"We tracked the intro in the courtyard of Rockfield Studios in Wales. I played an Epiphone C-60 nylon string that was miked with a couple of Neumann U87s. Neil had his wood blocks out there, and Geddy had a keyboard to play his flutey synth line. It took us a few takes to get it down without cars going by, but we liked the vibe of being outdoors. The electric parts were done inside the studio, and I played my 355 through the Hiwatt for the verses. I used a Roland JC-120 for the dreamy, clean middle section, because that's what I was using for chorus in those days."

### "THE SPIRIT OF RADIO"

PERMANENT WAVES [1980]



"I played my '78 Strat that I modified by putting a Bill Lawrence humbucker in the bridge. The flange came from an Eventide unit, and I used two Marshall 2x12 combos. In the second verse we blended a direct-recorded Strat to add some spikiness."

### "LIMELIGHT"

MOVING PICTURES [1981]



"That was my Strat with a Shark neck—made by a Canadian company—the Lawrence humbucker in the bridge, and a Floyd Rose trem. I tracked the rhythm guitars through an original Boss chorus into two Marshall 2x12 combos. I improvised the solo, and used a rack-mounted Loft chorus. The amps were at the usual volume—11! I stood in the control room and we cranked the monitors to get feedback. We regenerated the last note with an Eventide delay to keep it going. That solo is made up of all those pulls and drops with the Floyd, and they give it its unusual, elastic quality. It's my favorite recorded solo."



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# Back in the Limelight

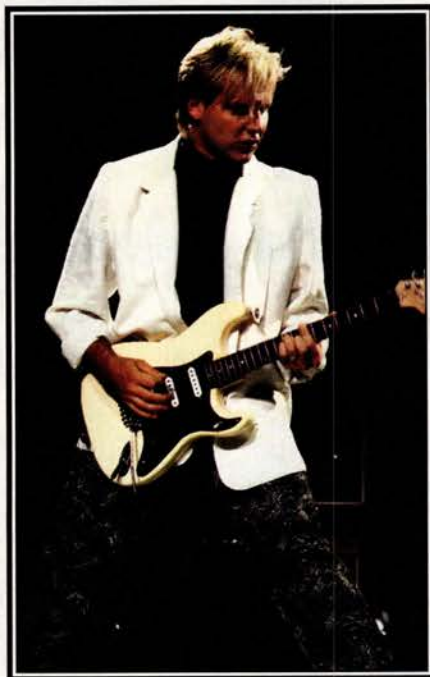
Continued from page 69

*What other guitars did you use on the album?*

I used the Tele for about 70 percent of it, but I also had every one of my guitars in the studio—about 50—and it was my dream to use them all, even if it was just for one little line. I came really, really close. The guitars I relied on the most were the ones I already mentioned, as well as a '78 Strat, a '75 Les Paul Standard, a 2001 Les Paul Deluxe, a '76 Gibson EDS-1275 doubleneck, and a 1991 PRS CE 24. Paul Northfield, the producer, also brought in some Danelectros that were possibly the worst guitars I've played in my life. They would not stay in tune, and they were very clumsy to play, but they had this loose, ratty sound that suited what we were going for in a few places.

*Did you use a ton of amps, too?*

No, that was much simpler. When I produced the Lifer project, [guitarist] Aaron Fink had a Hughes & Kettner TriAmp, and I was really impressed with how it sounded. So I had



GARY GERSHOFF/RETNA

*My Whammy Vice: Lifeson onstage in 1984 with a Floyd Rose-equipped Strat.*

the company send me a TriAmp, a zenTera, and a Duotone. I used the TriAmp for just about everything, and I used the zenTera a

fair bit. I also used a Matchless Clubman, and I pulled out my Marshall for a couple of things. I ran the Duotone, TriAmp, Clubman, and Marshall heads through a Marshall 4x12 with Greenback speakers.

*What did you use the zenTera on?*

I'm a real stickler for details, so I could tell you which guitars, amps, and strings gauges I used on everything—if I could just remember where I put my notes [laughs]. The zenTera has a warmth that's just awesome, and I used it in the second and third choruses of "Earthshine" for the soaring, background parts that sound like strings. I also used it for the solo and the gurgling parts in the verses of "Ghost Rider."

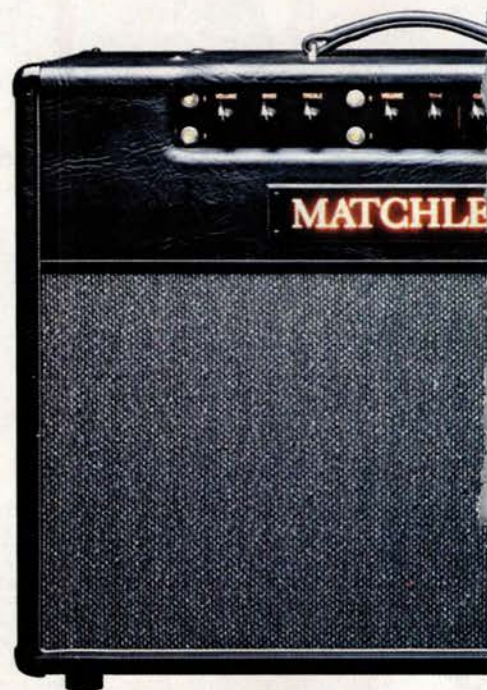
When I used it for clean parts, I usually chose one of the Tweed settings, and for mid-heavy, dirge-like stuff, I picked the Brit Hi Gain model. For the really over-amped stuff, it was the Ultra Gain model. I miked the amps with a Shure SM57 positioned directly in front of the speaker's dust cap.

*Did you do any direct recording?*

In the second verse of "How It Is," there's a quick guitar line that we thought we'd run through Amp Farm, but we ended up running the guitar through a Neve 1073 preamp and a bunch of compressors.

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*Back in the  
Limelight*

Audio—we've used it for a long time because we're comfortable with how it works—but we used three different digital conversion sources. For vocals and some drum parts it was an Apogee, for guitars and drums it was the converters in the Mackie D8B console, and for bass it was a Digidesign 888 interface. During the mixdown, we dumped a lot of the guitars to analog tape to add some warmth.

*This album has a ton of intertwining guitar parts—what are some of the tricks to doing that effectively?*

I was just having fun. On any given song, I did five or six different parts for each section. Sometimes it was too much, but it was still fun to lay the parts down and be able to make the decision later as to what worked best. Knowing when you've got too much is the real trick.

On "Vapor Trails," for example, I started off with a descending line on the 12-string side of my Gibson EDS-1275 doubleneck, and then I tried to find counterpoints with other guitars. Prior to mixing, the 12-string was the primary guitar, and the tinkling guitars played a background role. But Dave Leonard, who mixed the album, decided to push the other guitars up and bring the 12-string down, which gave the song a stripped-down, naked feel. That's not something that I would've thought of, but I think it was the best mix of all because it gave the vulnerable nature of the lyrics more impact.

*You used very few effects on the album.*

Definitely—I didn't use any chorus for the first time since it was invented [laughs]. For the swirling effect in the middle of "Out of the Cradle," I used a Hughes & Kettner Rotosphere. I also used a Boss digital delay a little bit, and some of the zenTera's effects, but most of the guitars are dry.

*The main riff in "How It Is" has an Irish jig feel.*

Yeah. When we wrote that song, it was very simple and plain, and I spent weeks trying to wreck it. I was doing all kinds of electric-guitar things, and nothing was working. I finally realized that it needed to stay simple.

*But it's not completely simple.*

For the middle part, I recorded 21 tracks of mandola, with groups of four or five tracks playing similar parts. In one group, I was just rubbing my fingers across the strings. In another, I was playing arpeggios. One group had a low line, and one had a fast, cross-picking thing. So there was this orchestra of mandola tracks that gave the part this beautiful, shimmering





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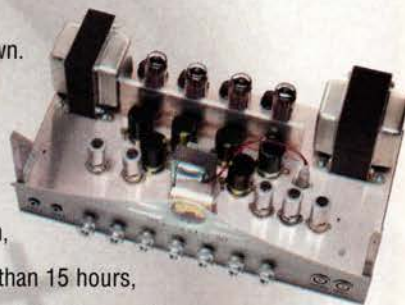
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## *Back in the Limelight*

effect. We really liked it, so we said "Let's throw some of it on the front." Then we thought, "Hey, you know what? 'Earthshine' could use some of that, too!" The mandola became the great utility instrument on the record—it crept into a lot of songs.

*What gear are you bringing on the road?*

For this tour, I've revamped my backline. I'm using two TriAmp half-stacks running in stereo for the main sound, and one or two zenTeras for super-clean or super-dirty tones with effects. I'll probably take my old T.C. Electronic 1210 Spatial Expander Stereo Chorus/Flanger, and replace my 2290 digital delays with multiple units such as the T.C. Electronic G-Force or G-Major. That'll pretty much be my whole rig—nice and simple.

*Early on, your most obvious influence was Jimmy Page—who else touched you?*

I was also influenced by Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, and Jimi Hendrix, but Page was definitely the biggest. He taught me about hard rock

and metal. He showed me how free soloing should be, and how you can walk the line—and even trip over it a couple of times—but you don't have to let anything restrict you. If your solo is a little loose or out of tune, that's not a mistake—it's a good thing.

Pete Townshend was an enormous influence, too—I learned rhythm guitar from him. Even though The Who was essentially a three-piece band, they never sounded thin or empty. They always sounded heavy and powerful, even when Pete was playing acoustic guitar.

I also love David Gilmour, Steve Hackett, Steve Howe, and Eric Johnson. As far as more recent players, I love Adam Jones of Tool—he's a great riff writer. A lot of his parts sound much more difficult than they are—and that's really an art. Tool is probably my favorite band right now.

*As Rush fans can be pretty nostalgic, do you ever feel pigeonholed by your past?*

We've always been very aware of how intense our fans are—a lot of them know more about this band than I do—but I've never been driven by their likes or dislikes. It can be frightening how passionate and loyal they are, but it's also amazing to talk to a fan and realize you've been a positive influence in their life. That goes straight to your heart, and it leaves a lump in your throat. We take that into consideration by doing a three-hour show with material we

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## Back in the Limelight

haven't played in a long time. That makes the fans happy, and it keeps the material fresh for us. I think the real Rush fans realize we need to move forward—or at least side to side—and experiment with new things.

*But do you still get psyched about playing "Closer to the Heart" and other Rush classics for the 100,000th time?*

Well, some of those old classics are finally going to be retired. For this tour, we're also going to make the set really unusual by playing stuff we've never played before. Obviously, there are standards like "Tom Sawyer" and "The Spirit of Radio" that we need to play, but audiences react so powerfully to those that it's always a treat to play them.

*Are there any downsides to working with the same people for almost 30 years?*

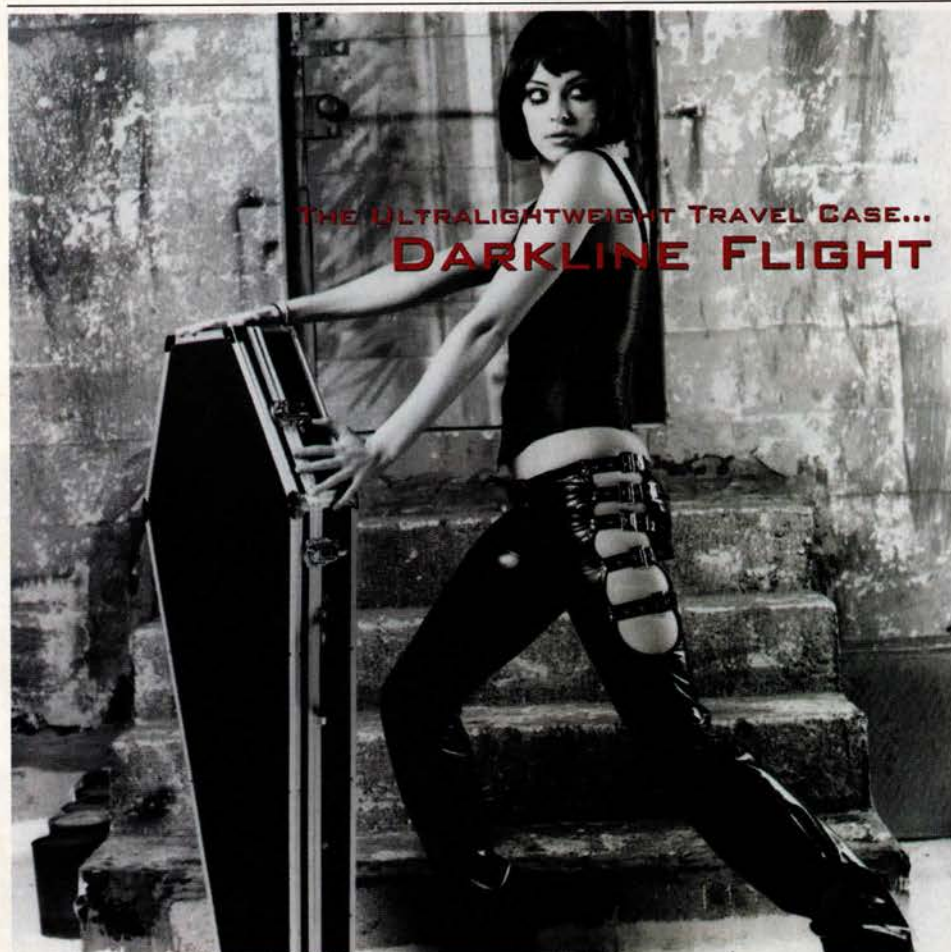
No. I might have thought that if I didn't have the benefit of doing other projects. It's great to work with other people, but Rush works in a certain way, and we each realize that we

shouldn't expect more than that. If I want to get darker and heavier, I feel perfectly at ease doing that outside the band. It's the same with Geddy. He likes a melodic approach to songwriting that sometimes doesn't fit with how I hear things, so he exercises that stuff outside the band.

*How has your outlook on guitar changed over the years?*

I don't play as much as I used to. I still absolutely love it, but it's not important for me to play every day anymore. I don't think I *could*. I mean, I have so many other interests, and my head is in so many other places—even musically—that don't require me to play guitar. But, invariably, when I go to my studio to work on *anything*, I always start by playing guitar. If that leads to something work-wise, that's great. If not, at least it reconnects me to my studio and my instrument.

I've also noticed now that, even if I go a month or two without playing, it doesn't affect me like it used to. My fingers used to get really stiff, and there would be a lot of spooling-up time to get back into shape. But now, my fingers might be a little soft, but it doesn't take long to get up to speed. The other advantage of not playing for a while is that when I come back, I'll play stuff that I never played before. I find that really fascinating.



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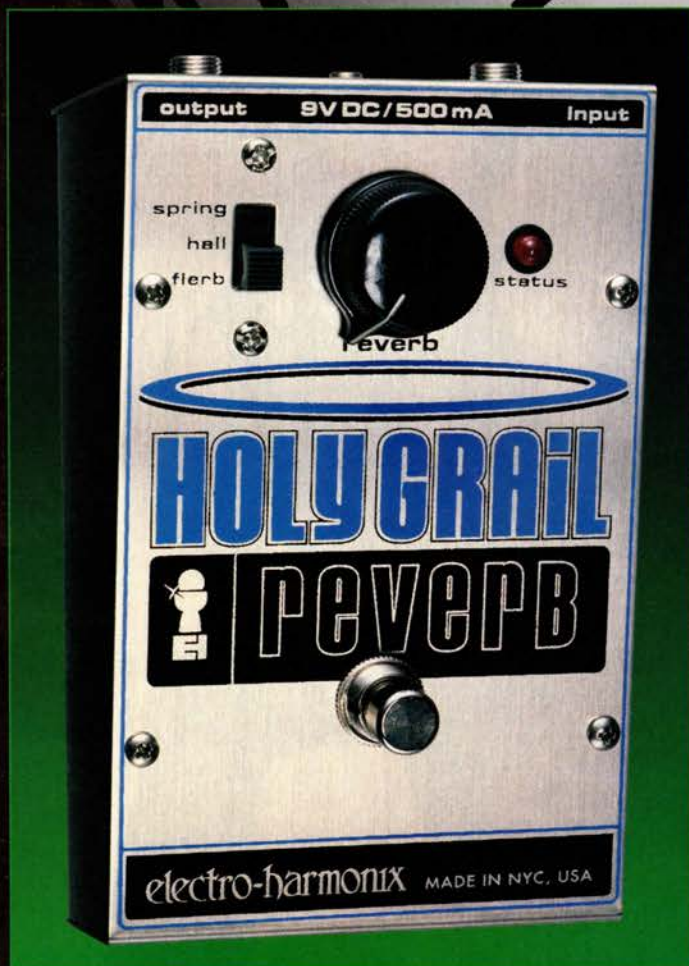
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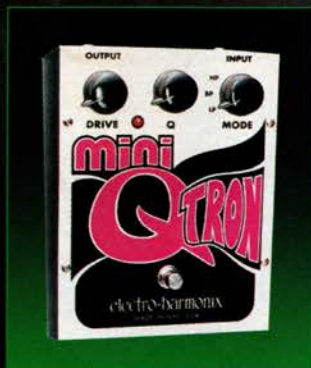




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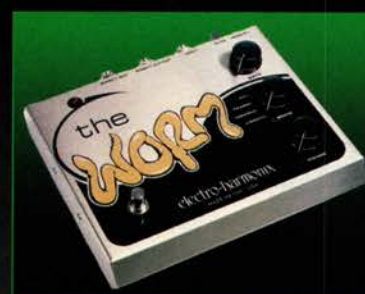
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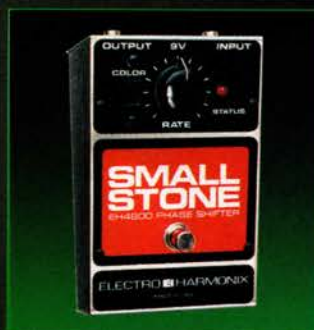
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Three years ago, when Redd Volkaert left the Roberts house band to join Merle Haggard, Hiland slipped into the lead guitar slot. Since then, he has earned a reputation as one of the hottest country pickers on the planet.

Hiland's story is compelling. He's legally blind, but that didn't stop him from dropping his history studies at the University of Southern Maine and making a nifty trek to Music City with less than \$100 in his jeans. Though he hasn't finished his first solo album, Fender recently signed him to an endorsement deal, and Hot Licks is releasing two Hiland instructional videos.

"It's great to hear people blow across changes with fast pentatonic scales—I do it myself—but my whole thing is imitating steel guitar," says Hiland. "I saw Ricky Skaggs perform when I was

ten, and something clicked in my mind—I had to get that twangy sound. I was vaguely aware Ricky had a B-Bender in his Tele, and Marty Stuart—who also had a B-Bender—was another big influence, so I spent my formative years learning to play B-Bender licks with my fingers. I had a B-Bender Tele for a while, but I found that I overused it and my finger bends were getting rusty. So I decided to play my steel licks with my fingers. Danny Gatton is my number one guy, and he never needed a Bender, so that's good enough for me."

S O S O E

## Yank the Chain

According to Hiland, you can emulate a steel by learning a few basic grips. "When you're bending a high note and holding a low one—something steelers do all the time—you have to *pull* the bend toward your feet," he explains. "These three moves [plays Ex. 1a] come in handy, because they let you play across chord changes."

The first bend implies an A triad with its 3 (C#) in the bass. As you stretch the third string away from you, notice how the top note shifts from the root (A) to the 2 (B).

"Your 1st finger makes a whole-step bend," Hiland explains. "Steel players have a lever or pedal assigned to this root-to-2 shift."

The second bend suggests a D triad. This time, the low note is the 5 (A), the top note is the 3 (F#), and the bend moves a half-step from 3 to 4 (F#-G). As before, pull the note toward your feet.

"When you're sliding this shape up or down the fretboard," says Hiland, referring to Ex. 1a's final grip, "you sometimes need to bend a whole-step to stay within the scale. This move suggests an Em triad with its ♭3 (G) and root (E). Harmonically, you're shifting from the root to the 2 (E to F#), and you get a dissonant sound that begs to be resolved. Using these grips, you can also work through a V-I change in the key of D [plays Ex. 1b], and you can go all the way down the neck, like this [plays Ex. 1c]. This is another V-I move, but now we're in the

Ex. 1a

Freely

Ex. 1b

♩ = 76-100

Ex. 1c

♩ = 76-100

Ex. 2

♩ = 92-112

Ex. 3

Country swing ♩ = 84-100

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key of A, and the bends alternate between grace-note and more rhythmic sixteenth-note maneuvers. To be more melodic, stagger the low and high notes [plays Ex. 2]. I love pretty licks like this one in G [plays Ex. 3]. The open string adds some sparkle."

## Double Trouble

Hiland often bends two strings in harmony, as in Ex. 4. The phrase begins with a pair of whole-step bends on the third and second strings. Now that there's no note below the bends, stretch the strings toward you. The key is to freeze your fretting-hand fingers into a fixed grip, and then move them as a unit. "I stole this from Reggie Young," admits Hiland. "He plays beautiful lines like these in slow ballads. The last sus4 bend and resolution on the fourth string

is a classic steel move."

Ex. 5 also features harmony bends, but this time the sus4 bend and release happen on the fifth string. Try stringing both examples into a V-IV-I pattern in the key of A (E-D-A). First play Ex. 4 (V), then Ex. 5 (IV), and finally slide Ex. 5 to the second position to nail A (I).

## Slip-Sliding

"Steel players whip out these really fast licks along two strings," says Hiland, playing Ex. 6. "To play them on guitar, you need to master pre-bends. It also helps to understand the repeating dance that occurs in the first six beats. After picking a note on the first string, drop to the second string for a pre-bend, release, and shift positions—all with a very fluid, almost mechanical motion. Give yourself some time with this one. Steelers just slide their bar from point to point and use a pedal for the bend and release, but guitarists have to work a lot harder."

Notice how each beat begins with piquant major- or minor-second bends that release into sweeter major or minor thirds. For maxi-

mum sustain and steel vibe, don't lift your fingers from the strings until you reach bar 2's third beat, and carefully observe the accents and *let ring* markings.

"Do you like that behind-the-nut bend?" asks Hiland. "Jerry Donahue *owns* that technique."

## Cluck and Shift

"I do my share of chicken pickin'," says Hiland, as he plays Ex. 7a. "And it's more than a cool effect, because you can use a ghost note to get from one point to the next."

In bar 1, notice the muted cluck on the *and* of beats two and four. This is what Hiland uses to "mask" his shift from the twelfth to the tenth position, and then from the tenth to the eighth position. If you use your 3rd finger for the cluck—as shown—you'll be set up for the next series of notes.

Bar 1's first pre-bend covers a half-step, and the second spans a whole-step. Bar 2's closing moves are classic B-Bender fare. To make those last G-A bends a bit easier, back up your 2nd finger—the one that's doing the

Ex. 4

♩ = 84-116

Ex. 5

♩ = 84-116

Ex. 6

♩ = 60-96

Ex. 7a

♩ = 120-160  
Country swing

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work—with your 1st finger. In Ex. 7b, we adapt these moves to D7. Play both examples with a country-swing feel.

Ex. 8 is another cluck-and-shift gem. This fast E7-D7-A7 lick features three pre-bends and releases, as well as two transitional clucks. The clucks let you keep the rhythm flowing as you first move from the tenth to the eighth position, and then from the eighth to the fifth position.

Notice bar 2's pair of triplet eighth-notes. Splitting a beat into three equal parts can provide a rhythmic source of tension. In this case, tension builds in the middle of bar 2—across beats two and three—and is then released with beat four's quarter-note.

## Ex. 7b

♩ = 120-160

Country swing

♩ =  $\frac{1}{3}$  D7

## Ex. 8

♩ = 96-138

Country swing

♩ =  $\frac{1}{3}$  (V) E7

## Ex. 9a

♩ = 116-138 (I) A7

"Triplets give you a rolling sensation," Hiland elaborates. "They push the lick forward."

Pull the final sus4 bends (bar 2, beat three) toward the floor, and for maximum twang, keep the G ringing below them.

## Speedy Tricks

"You can play fast without much fretting-finger commotion," asserts Hiland—who proves it by playing Examples 9a and 9b. "If you think about it, steel players don't move their bars for every note. They find a position and pull several notes out of it. With this approach, your picking hand does the quick moves."

The secret lies in the left-hand setup. In a single move, fret the first, second, and third strings, and then instantly follow this "clamp" with a smooth pre-bend. Once you're in place, the first four notes almost play themselves. For a full-on honky tonk sound, pick the treble strings with a reverse roll (ring-middle-flatpick).

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## HONKY TONK HANDS

LIKE MOST HOT-ROD COUNTRY guitarists, Hiland uses a hybrid picking technique (Fig. 1). He grips a Fender medium flatpick, and uses acrylic nail extensions on his middle and ring fingers.

Hiland peppers his lines with two- and three-string oblique bends. (In an oblique bend, a note is bent against one or more stationary pitches.) To give his bending fingers maximum support, Hiland parks his fretting-hand thumb behind the neck (Fig. 2). Notice how he momentarily mutes the unwanted bass strings with his right-hand palm.

When stretching a high string and holding a lower one, Hiland pulls the bend toward his feet (Fig. 3). —AE



Fig. 1



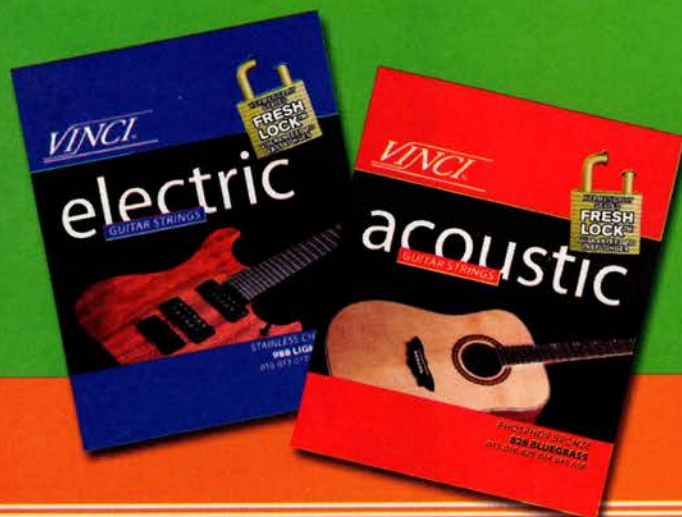
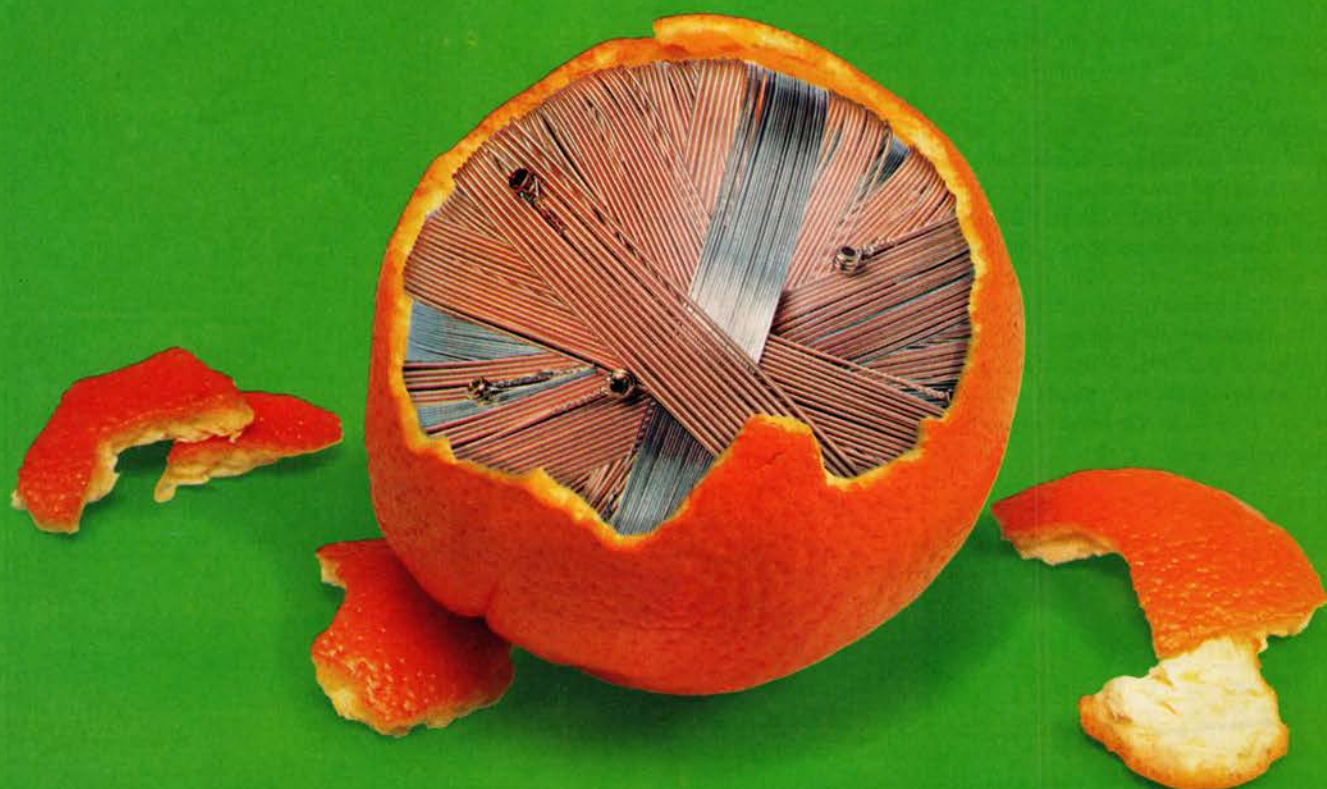
Fig. 2



Fig. 3



fresh picked



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**Ex. 10** lets you create a shower of notes using essentially one fretting-hand grip per measure. This sustained bend occurs in both bars 1 and 2—first in the fifth position, and then in the third position. In this lick, use your 1st finger to play the ghosted clucks, and don't let the second-string bend go flat while you're holding it—it has to ring against the higher tones.

In bar 3, you need to simultaneously grab all three treble strings before launching into beat one. It's worth the effort: This clamp yields six notes, including a prolonged bend and a crying release.

"When steelers play a burst of fast notes like this," says Hiland, playing **Ex. 11a**, "it's often from a single position. Their bar stays still, and the melodic moves come from pedals or levers."

Whether played by fiddle, steel, or 6-string, the sextuplet sixteenth-note rhythm that powers this lick is a staple of country shredding. Get your three-string clamp and pre-bend in place before the downbeat. Once you start picking,

the only fretting-hand movement occurs on the third string as you alternately release and bend.

**Ex. 11b** is an inversion of this hot-rod *E7* lick. The technique is the same, only the position changes. "You can play these back to back in a run," says Hiland. "And if you're playing a fast bluegrass tune, these licks will turn a few heads. People expect the standard flatpicking style, and this fast right-hand plucking takes them by surprise. I love to explore this angle because not many guitar players do."

## Sweet and Sour

"If I had to choose a favorite bending lick,

### Ex. 10

Ex. 10 (V)  
♩ = 112-132 E

Ex. 10

♩ = 112-132

(V) E (IV) D (I) A7

hold B

7 (9) 7 (9) 5 (9) 7 5

5 (7) 5 (7) 3 (7) 5 3

7 (9) 8 (9) 7 5 7

5 6

**Ex. 11a**

♩ = 56-72 E7

The first system of the musical score for 'The Wind' is shown. It features a treble clef, a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff, starting with a 4-measure rest followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The bass line is indicated by a thick black line on the staff. Below the staff, there are three measures of tablature for the bass guitar, each starting with a '6' and followed by a sequence of notes: (10)12, (13)11, (13)12, (13)11, (13)12, (13)11, (13)12, (13)11, (13)12, (13)11, (13)12, (13)11, (13)12, (13)11, (13)12. Above the tablature, there are three 'hold' instructions: 'hold \*pre-B', 'hold B', and 'hold B'. The tablature is written in a standard notation with numbers 10, 12, and 13, and letters B and R.

\*Pre-bend from 11th fret.

**Ex. 11b**

♩ = 56-72 E7

\*Pre-bend from 14th fret.

### Ex. 12a

## Freely

### Ex. 12b

• = 138-184

Freely

(I) A7 (IV) D7 (I) A7

hold B

9 (11) 9 8 9 (11) 8 (11) 8 (11) 8 9 (11) (11) (11) 9 8 (11) (11) 8 8 7 5 7 5 6 7 7 5 6



**"If there's no beautiful melody flowing out of the solo, than it's all hogwash." —Johnny Hiland**



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# STEELWORKER

against the behind-the-nut G-A bend and fatten up the sound."

Here are some performance tips:

- As you change positions in bar 1 (and of beat two), use the side of your picking-hand thumb to briefly mute the strings while your fretting fingers are airborne.
- Use your 1st and 2nd finger to push the nut bend up a whole-step.
- As you bend the open G, lock in on the tar-

get A before adding vibrato.

Ex. 15 combines several techniques we've covered in this lesson. Check out the sly fingering shift in the pickup notes: After playing the harmonized bends and releases with your 2nd and 3rd fingers, slip into the seventh position to fret E-G# with your 3rd and 4th fingers.

In bar 1, play both bends and releases with your 1st finger while sustaining higher tones above. Use two fingers for bar 2's repeated G-A bend, and for ultimate spank, pluck all double-stops with your middle and ring fingers.

## Solo Sense

"A solo is more than just stringing licks together," says Hiland. "I have students who try

to play every lick they've learned from every artist they've heard—all in four bars. There's no fluency there. Listen to the vocal melody, and base your solo off it. It's important to make *music*, not just practice riffs. Record yourself playing 10 minutes of a I-IV-V rhythm pattern—maybe throw a VI in there—and then start soloing over it. See if you can take yourself on a musical journey beyond the average country solo. I'm always thinking, 'How can I spin this into something beautiful? How can I tweak listeners' ears?' I want to give people something they don't expect. Instead of copying Brent Mason, Vince Gill, Ricky Skaggs, and Steve Wariner, I try to *intertwine* what I've learned from them. It's like braiding a rope." ■

### Ex. 15

♩ = 88-120

Country swing

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GUEST GURU

## Brian Setzer's Bop-a-Billy Basics

BY JUDE GOLD



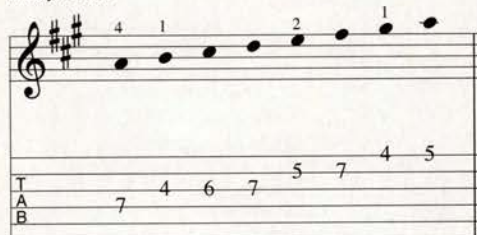
### IF YOU COULD POUR

Brian Setzer's explosive mixture of rock, country, jazz, and rockabilly into the gas tank of a mus-

cle car, you'd win any drag race. But while Setzer's riffs sound like pure spontaneous combustion, they're fueled by a strong understanding of theory.

#### Ex. 1

A major scale



#### Ex. 2

♩ = 160

Swing feel

A7



#### Ex. 3

♩ = 160

Swing feel

Amaj7

F#7b9

Bm7

B9

E13

Amaj7



### Hotwired Scales

"Once you learn scales and chord progressions, you can make up your own versions," offers Setzer. The tattooed guitarist loves teaching young players how to escape the diatonic doldrums. "Watch this," he offers. "Instead of playing a regular A major scale like this one [plays Ex. 1], I'll turn it into something like this." [Plays Ex. 2, which adds chromatic notes and slides.]

### Changing Lanes

While Ex. 2 surfs an A7 vamp nicely, the next step is adjusting to shifting harmonies. "Once you learn how to change with the chords, you can fill in the spaces," says Setzer, demonstrating with Ex. 3, a swingin' line that nails the chords' outer extensions with a Charlie Parker-like flair. Give the phrase a swing feel, and slur the sixteenth-notes.



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"Rock and roll is the physical thing that just comes out of you," says Brian Setzer. "The other stuff you have to sit down and learn."



"What I've just played for you is *bebop*," says Setzer. "Bebop ties together a lot of loose ends for me. But you don't have to play that all night. At any time, you can go back into rocking." Proving his point, Setzer busts into a high-octane mixture of Travis picking and blues.

### Hot-Rod Harmony

"You can play a simple melody [plays Ex. 4a] and then add chords to it," says Setzer. He then plays Ex. 4b, a harmonized version of the notes in Ex. 4a. Try it as a I-VI-II-V turnaround in *E*.

"The best part about all this stuff," says Setzer, "is that when people hear you play it, they really get it."

Look for Brian Setzer's Christmas album in stores this October. ■

#### Ex. 4a

Freely

*E*

#### Ex. 4b

$\text{♩} = 100-144$

*E*

*Em7♭5/G*

*F#m7*

*B13*

*E*



# Keller Williams' One-Man Jam Band

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BY JUDE GOLD

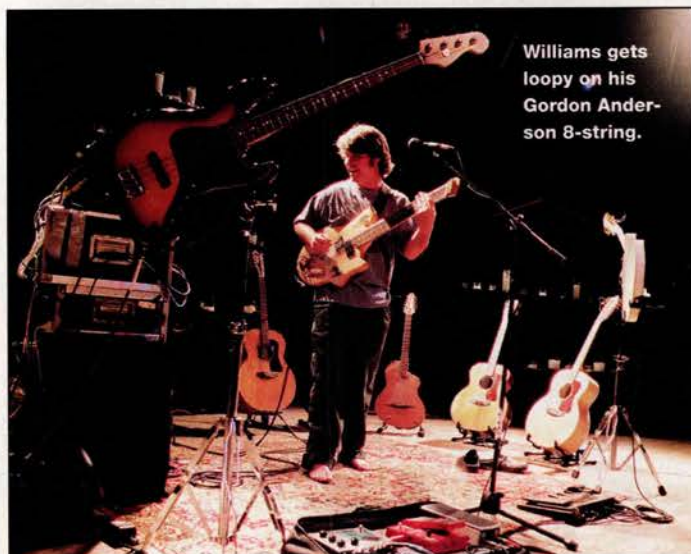
**THESE DAYS, YOU DON'T NEED** a full band to put on a great rock show. Keller Williams' gargantuan grooves pack halls across the country, and they're generated on the fly using a circle of guitars, a bass, a vocal mic, and, most importantly, a Lexicon Jam Man. "What I try to create is a piece of music so flawless that you can't tell the difference between what's live and what's being looped," says Williams.

To demonstrate, Williams starts off a spontaneous song by slapping a "drumbeat" on the body of his main guitar, a Guild 12-string acoustic. "I tap the pick like a snare drum," says Williams. "There's a John Pearse contact pickup in there with a separate output, so it sounds huge through the P.A. system." Once Williams has found the right pattern, he loops a measure of it with a footswitch that is connected to the Jam Man (Ex. 1).

Next, in Ex. 2, Williams adds a sparkly, syncopated B-minor loop using 7th- and 5th-fret harmonics. Then, he goes over to his Fender bass—which is mounted on a stand for quick access—and drops a quick bass line, which is written out for guitar in Ex. 3. The final layer is a tenor line, the repeating single-note riff that Williams loops in Ex. 4. With examples 1 through 4 all sounding simultaneously, San Francisco's Fillmore Auditorium (where we met to do this lesson) sounds like it has a four-piece funk band onstage, with Williams singing and soloing over the top.

"When you're doing it in front of an audience, it adds to the adrenaline," says Williams. "There's a huge danger factor, because you have to hit the button at exactly the right time. But once you've set up a great loop, that's when the beauty comes. You've created a huge *band* sound by yourself, using what you have around you."

Check out Keller Williams' new album *Laugh* [Scifidelity].



Williams gets loopy on his Gordon Anderson 8-string.

♩ = 112  
Body slaps

Ex. 1

"kick" "snare"

Bm11

Funky harmonics

Ex. 2

3

8va

3 or 1

loco

7 7 7 7 5 5

Ex. 3

Bass line

7 7 5 5 6 6

Ex. 4

Tenor line

9 7 9 7 6 6 6 7



# Barres of the Stars

BY SHANE THERIOT



## MANY GUITARISTS KNOW HOW

to play barre chords, yet few tap into all of the magic a 1st-finger barre can offer. Great players often use the 1st finger like a mobile capo, holding down two or more strings while the other three fingers create riffs and chords.

Ex. 1 is a chordal shift in the style of Keith Richards, who has forged his own sound with 1st-finger barres. (Richards often uses an open-G tuning, but we've re-fingered the move for standard tuning.) This is a good way to give a I-IV progression new teeth, and it sounds great with a dirty tone. Once you've got the lick nailed, try shifting it down the neck in whole-steps.

Eric Johnson and Steve Vai like to revoice power chords by fretting the low root with the 3rd finger, as in Ex. 2. Sonically, these grips just seem to *cut* better, and they allow you to call in your second finger to fret low 7s, as in D5/C and C5/B.

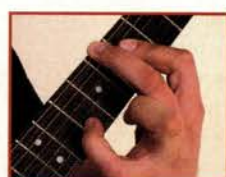
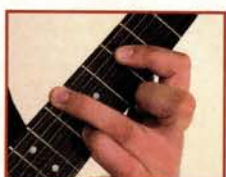
Allan Holdsworth is widely known for his amazing solos, but he also possesses otherworldly comping chops. Ex. 3 outlines a beautifully dissonant chord move in A minor that you might hear Holdsworth play. The trick is to keep your 1st finger firmly planted for the duration of the phrase. (This one also sounds great over C major.)

By using a full barre, we can also outline entire chords. Ex. 4 is a Curtis Mayfield-approved

phrase that sounds gorgeous over Fmaj7 or Dm9. Aim for a flowing, graceful sound, being sure to allow the notes to ring together. To do this, place your index finger across the 10th fret, letting the 3rd and 4th fingers do the work.

For more barre-hopping adventures, check out Andres Segovia's Fernando Sor classical guitar arrangements, Allan Holdsworth's book *Reaching for the Uncommon Chord*, or any Michael Hedges recording.

Shane Theriot is currently recording his second solo CD, and can be heard on albums by *The Neville Brothers*, *Adam Nitti*, and *Johnny Vidacovich*. Visit Theriot at [shanetheriot.com](http://shanetheriot.com).



Ex. 1  
à la Keith Richards

(I) C (IV) F/C

Ex. 2  
à la Eric Johnson/Steve Vai

D5 D5/C C5/B C5



Ex. 3  
à la Allan Holdsworth

Am9 Dm9

Ex. 4  
à la Curtis Mayfield

Fmaj7 or Dm9

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## CLASSIC COLUMN

# Rik Emmett

## EIGHT BASIC SECRETS TO GREAT GUITAR PLAYING



**MAKES A GREAT MAGAZINE** article title, doesn't it? Of course, this is a subjective viewpoint, but it *is* food for thought and can serve as a starting point for discussion and self-examination.

**1. Emotion.** Soul, feeling, and interpretation—all of these things reveal your character and lead to an individual style. You have to make personal statements with whatever music you play. Ex. 1a is a lick with no personality. But if you play it as it's rendered in Ex. 1b—with bends, slides, and slurs—it comes to life. Finally, when you inject *yourself* into this lick, it will evolve as much again.

**2. Attitude.** Andres Segovia is 93 years old. What keeps him going? Desire, persistence, and dedication. "This is how I work—step by step and very hard, with full attention. Otherwise you cannot progress," says the maestro. He is the all-time champion, and when he speaks, we all should listen.

**3. Timing and Feel.** Being able to get in the groove, to play "in the pocket," or "behind the beat"—these are crucial elements of musical communication. A hot solo is one thing, but a hot solo over a killer rhythm track is another thing altogether.

**4. Melodic Sense.** "The right note at the right time" does not necessarily mean simplicity, but an awareness of what is going on around and *under* the melody. You could play the notes in Ex. 2a and you wouldn't be wrong. Ex. 2b, however, has greater impact, even though it is more economical.

**5. Harmonic Sense.** Harmony is the color, the landscape behind the subject, the glue that holds everything else together. Look at Ex. 2b again, but this time, re-harmonize the melody with the chords in Ex. 3. This shows how your playing can become more interesting by exploiting the potentials of harmony.

**6. Technique.** It's perhaps the most attractive and compelling aspect of great playing, but also the most dangerous and abused. It *is* necessary

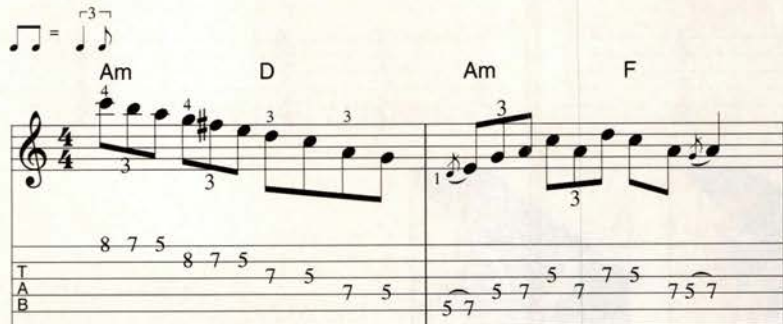
Ex. 1a Am



Ex. 1b Am



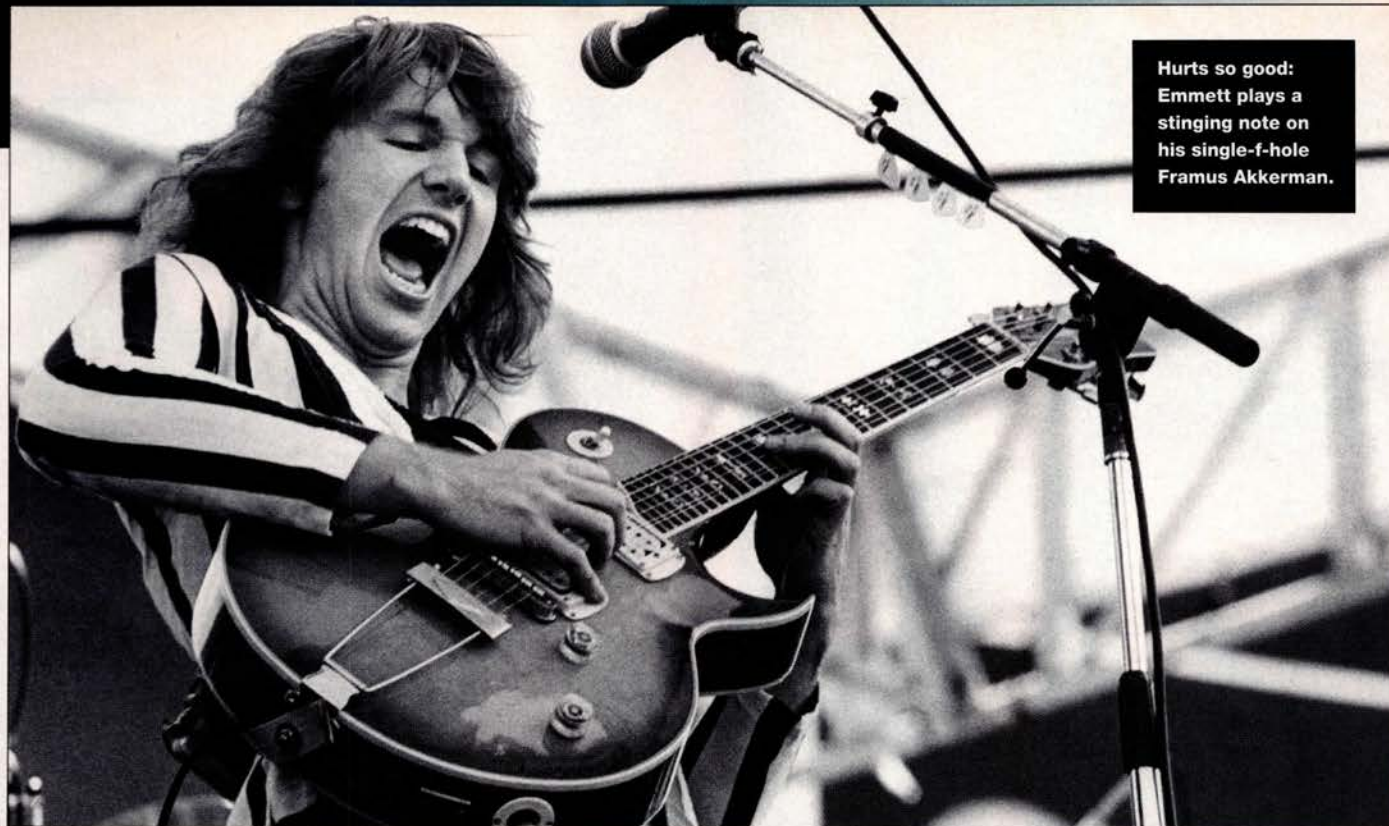
Ex. 2a



Ex. 2b







Hurts so good: Emmett plays a stinging note on his single-f-hole Framus Akkerman.

to have your chops in shape, but this shouldn't manifest itself in a "gunslinger" mentality. One reason the Eddie Van Halens and Paganinis have been so successful is that they did not sacrifice secrets 1 through 5 at the altar of #6.

**7. Mental Approach.** Great playing requires

great preparation. Be organized, focused, and confident, and exhibit taste and discretion. Your actual performance should feel like a living, breathing thing.

**8. Sound**—the golden *tones* you produce. You need the right equipment to make it hap-

pen, but I don't want to mislead you here: Your sound will come more from *how* you play than from *what* you're playing through.

It's the amazing combinations of the elements on this list that make a guitarist a legend. Of course, after all this intellectual analysis, it might behoove us to recall a quote from Pete Townshend: "I don't have a love affair with the guitar," he says. "I don't polish it after every performance; I play the f\*\*\*ing thing."

*In the '80s, when Rik Emmett wasn't rocking arenas with Triumph, he was writing his "Back to Basics" columns for GP. This one, abridged from its original size, ran in December 1986.*

**Ex. 3**

Am7	D9	Gsus4	G	Fmaj7
1 3 1 4 1	X 2 1 3 3 3	3 X O O 1 4	3 2 O O O 4	X 3 4 2 1 O

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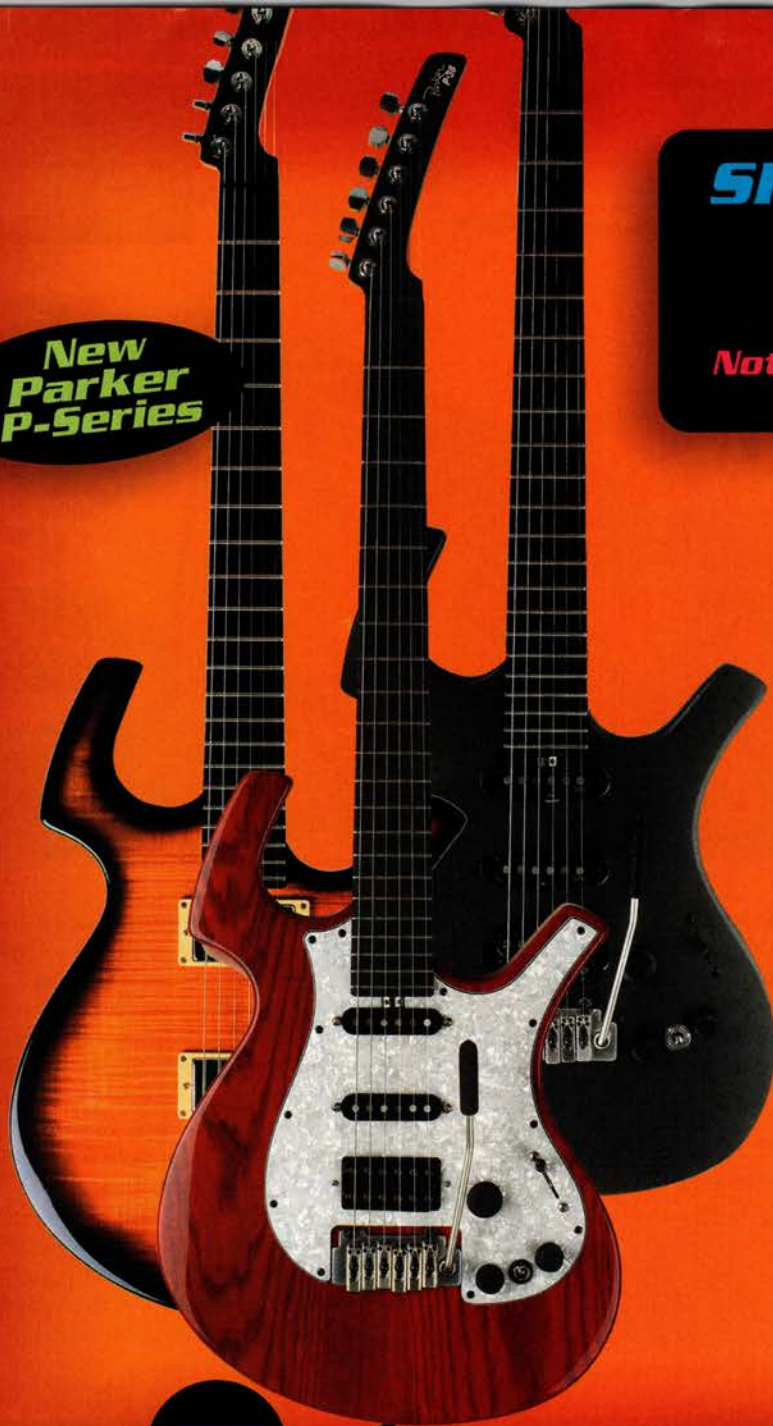
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## AUDIO



## Roy Rogers

Slideways

**T**hat's not a slide on Roy Rogers' pinky, it's a time machine. With it, Rogers transports you to the Mississippi Delta's past and future. On his new album, *Slideways*, Rogers is backed by a revolving cast of hotshots (including Norton Buffalo on harp and Zigaboo Modeliste on drums) as he tears through rocking shuffles, New Orleans funk jams, and acoustic stomps like an old soul with modern chops. Even on the album's more soothing, introspective numbers, it's Rogers' guitar that does the soul searching, because for the first time ever, Rogers has recorded an album without vocals. "It's a crazy album," says Rogers, "but I think it's a good crazy." —JUDE GOLD

• • • • •

*What inspired you to do an instrumental record?*

In a way, this record *does* have vocals—the slide guitar talks the talk. I realized that I express myself best on the guitar, and it was very liberating not doing vocals. I think the music speaks truer on

this record without them.

*Even when you're playing fast flurries of notes, you remain undeniably bluesy.*

Although I'm not a traditionalist, I am steeped in the Delta blues, where the slide typically mimics the human voice. So no matter how fast you're playing, you still have to carry on a conversation. Those guys would sing half the lyrics, and then complete them with a guitar. If you lose that conversational aspect in your playing, you have to go back to square one and find it.

*On "Avalanche" and "For the Children," the guitar seems to pan back and forth between the speakers.*

That's my Leslie speaker, which is part of my main rig. I love that wide tone. To get that,

I leave the Leslie on the slow setting, and mic it in stereo so that the panning effect really comes through. The Leslie is powered by my Mesa/Boogie Mark IIa combo, which is also miked. A lot of my tracks are recorded using small amps, like my old '50s Valco. When you're overdriving a tiny 8" speaker, you're distorting the entire physicality of the thing. Hit a note, and it lasts *forever*.

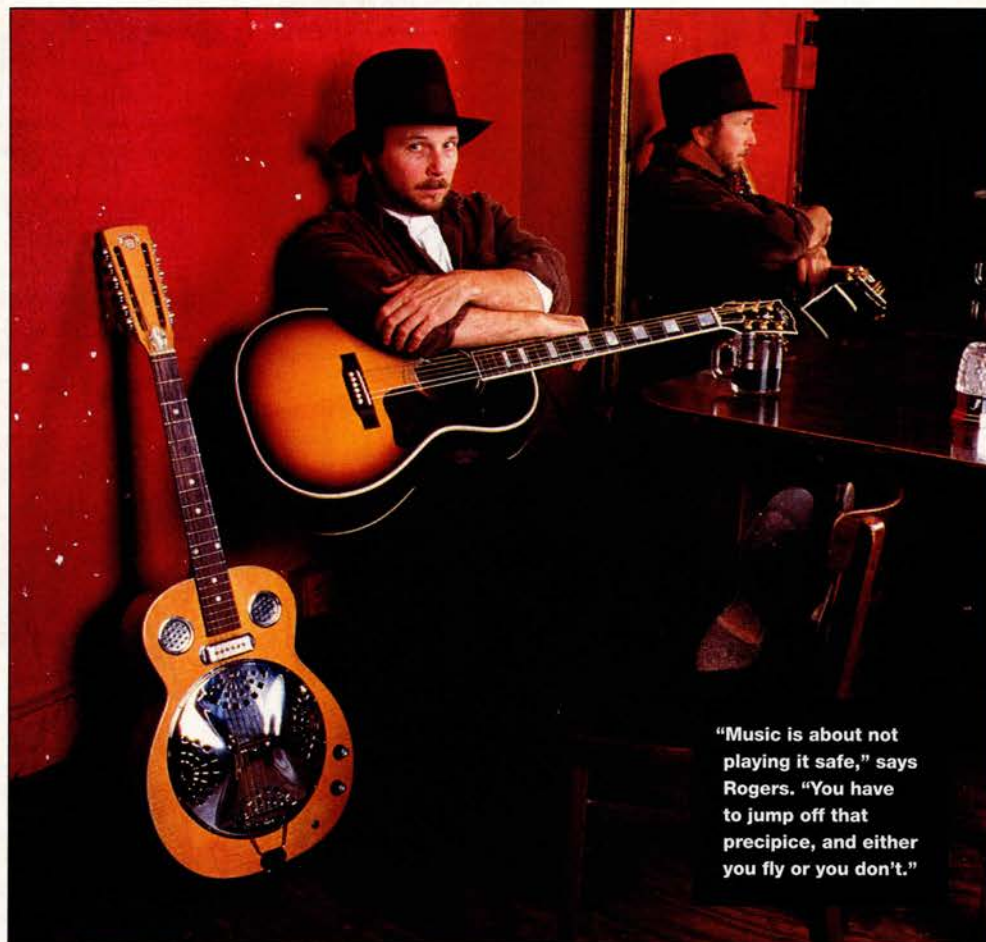
*What are your favorite slide tunings?*

I'm all over the map. I use open E on my Martin acoustic, open D on my Gibson ES-125 and '58 Les Paul Junior, and open G on my reissue '57 Strat. Some of the songs are in strange keys, like A $\flat$ , G $\flat$ , and F. I hear so many blues songs in E and G that I decided to capo up to

more offbeat keys.

*Having produced successful albums for your former band-leader, John Lee Hooker—as well as for Ramblin' Jack Elliot and others—what do you think makes a good blues record?*

You have to approach an album as a whole. A lot of great records have a common thread that holds them together—not necessarily a running theme, but a sequence of sounds that take you on a trek. You should also remember that overdubs are great for adding dimension, but if the part doesn't propel the music, leave it out. The biggest thing, however, is to create a comfort zone for the musicians involved. If everyone is having a good time, I guarantee it will come through on the record. *Evidence.*



**"Music is about not playing it safe," says Rogers. "You have to jump off that precipice, and either you fly or you don't."**





### Greenwheel

*Soma Holiday*

These lads from St. Louis seem poised to grab their piece of the modern rock pie with this ambitious debut. Guitarists Andrew Dwiggins and Marc Wanninger deliver the radio-friendly

goods with big riffs, cool counterpoint lines, and sparkly clean tones, and they mix them up enough to give the tunes a nice sense of dynamics and movement. Nowhere is this more effective than in the epic first single, "Breathe," where pristine acoustic chords give way to dreamy tremoloed electrics, which then turn the stage over to half-stack power chords. Comparisons to other bands in this crowded genre will undoubtedly dog Greenwheel, but they have the juice to rise above that and capitalize on an impressive first effort. **Island.** —MATT BLACKETT

### Mother Superior

*Sin*

Hammering down with a style that lies

somewhere between the Black Crowes and Gov't Mule, Mother Superior combines magnum-force punch with great melodies, roaring hooks, and clever arrangements. Guitarist/lead vocalist Jim Wilson, bassist Marcus Blake, and drummer Jason Mackenroth actually have second jobs backing punk/poet Henry Rollins, but they continue to moonlight their own hard-rocking wares as Mother Superior. The trio's fifth release, *Sin*, features great guitar work by Wilson, who, wielding a blistering tone that's rife with '70s-style, exploding-transistor attitude, kicks out a perpetual stream of *huge* riffs, ballsy leads, and wicked slide grooves. His acoustic bottlenecking on "Downtown Tom's Medicine #2" sounds earthy and *bad*, and his fuzzy wailing and bone-crushing rhythms on the 12-plus minute "Fade Out, Wounded Animal" are jam fodder par excellence. **MuscleTone.** —ART THOMPSON

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### Favez

*From Lausanne, Switzerland*

Favez's Chris Wicky and Guy Bee sport stark, raw tones, and something many alt-rockers shy away from—a good dose of lead-guitar action. Feedback and skanky dissonance are other staples in Wicky and Bee's 6-string diet (check out "The Ages of Wonders" and "Come On, Give Me a Smile"), but they also indulge in tasty dashes of vaporous Leslies ("Someday All This Will Be Mine"), sickly phasers ("Don't Let the Riot In"), and beat-up-sounding acoustics ("Troubled Life Blues"). **Doghouse.** —SHAWN HAMMOND



### Nitty Gritty Dirt Band

*Will the Circle Be Unbroken*

In the late '60s and early '70s, country and rock were courting each other—albeit very suspiciously. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's 1973 release, *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*, is generally regarded as the record that brought both sides together and showed the stodgy country establishment that young rock and roll musicians had the *utmost* respect for country's pioneers. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band proved this by recording *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* with the musicians who wrote the blueprint for country



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## Reviews

music: Mother Maybelle Carter, Earl Scruggs, Merle Travis, Doc Watson, and Roy Acuff, among others. *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* not only stands on its own as a musical statement, but as a historical document of a time when the torch was being passed from one generation to another. **Columbia.**

—DARRIN FOX

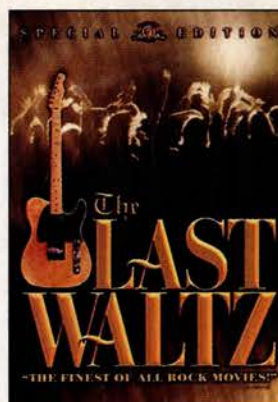
## DVD

### The Band

*The Last Waltz*

Originally released in 1978, the motion picture *The Last Waltz* was a chronicle of the

Band's 1976 farewell concert performance. The DVD reissue of the movie is fascinating for myriad reasons, but one in particular—Robbie Robertson finally emerges as a guitar hero. On both group tracks—and those by guest artists such as Van Morrison, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Eric Clapton and Bob Dylan—Robertson steps center stage and peels-off one scorching solo after another. It's ironic that he wasn't fully appreciated as a guitar slinger until the Band's swan song.



As for the extra DVD goodies, the film's widescreen transfer was approved by director Martin Scorsese, and its digital 5.1 surround audio mix was produced by Robertson. Both are of stellar quality. There is also unreleased jamming footage, movie trailers, and interviews with the group and guest musicians.

But the best part of the film is just watching Robertson get his due. Scorsese tightly focus-

es his cameras right on the guitarist, emphasizing his place as the Band's architect and artistic well spring. There are many highpoints, but especially check him out going toe-to-toe with Clapton on "Further on up the Road." Although Slowhand plays some tasty, understated blues solos on Blackie—his trademark Strat—Robertson verily upstages him with his own ferocious leads on his own sunburst Stratocaster. It's exciting stuff and one of the many reasons why *The Last Waltz* is a must-own DVD. And for the truly insatiable, Rhino Records has released an accompanying 4-CD box set featuring 24 previously unreleased rehearsals and performances. **MGM/UA.**

—PETE PROWN

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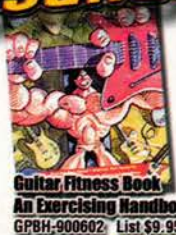
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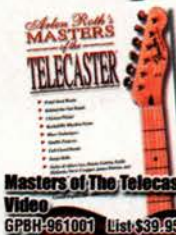
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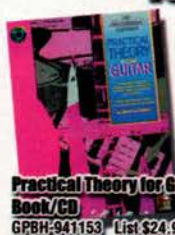
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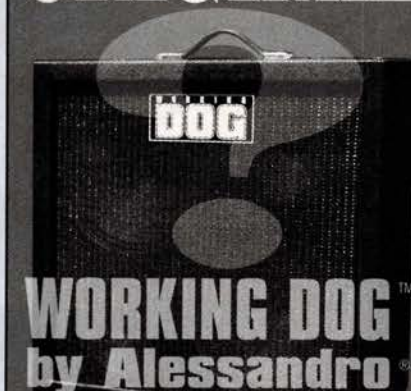


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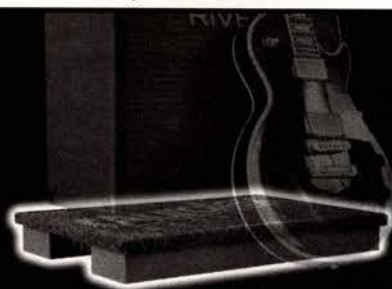
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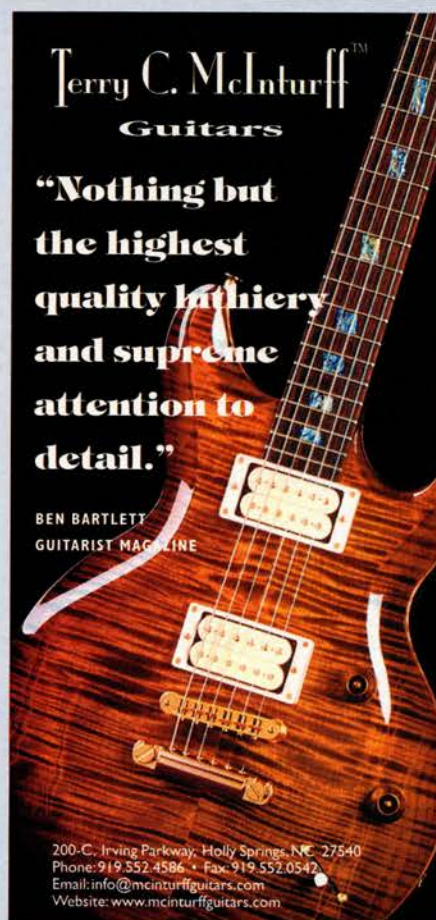
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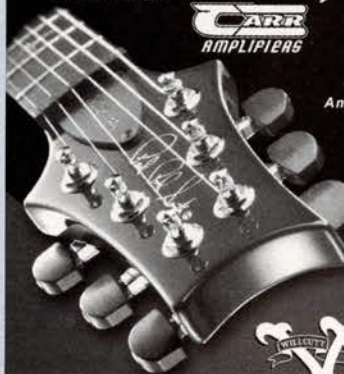
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## Bench Tests

# Thin Is In

## Godin Flat Five

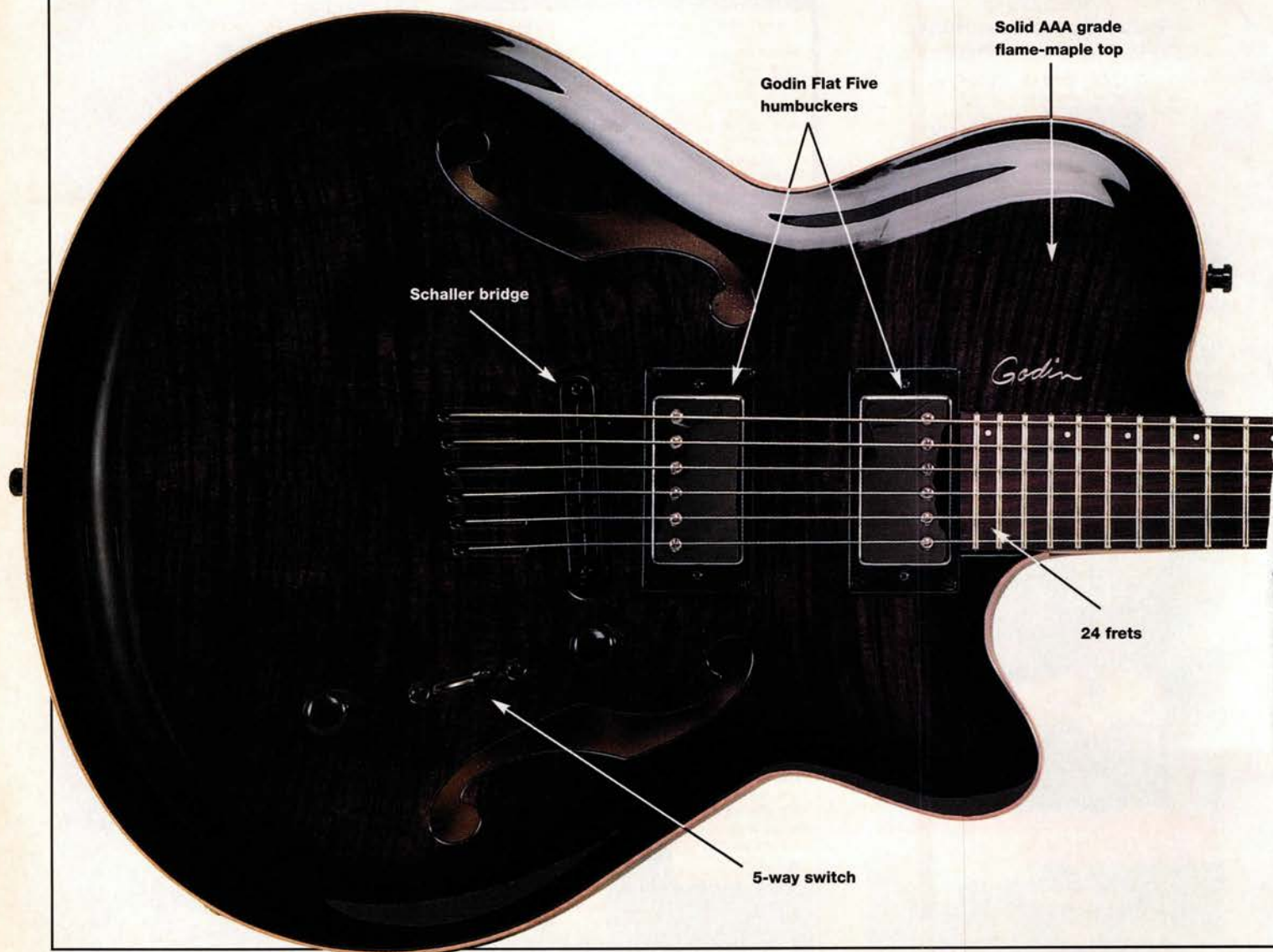
By Matt Blackett

**F**or almost 20 years, the Godin company has been quietly producing fine instruments that range from trad offerings such as the

Jr.-esque LG to the radical 11-string, fretless Glissentar. Their latest creation, the Flat Five (\$1,595 with case; also available as the Flat Five X with LR. Baggs

### Snapshot

The Godin Flat Five (\$1,595 retail with case/street N/A) is a semi-hollow, two-humbucker guitar that boasts rock-solid construction and flexible tones that make it suitable not only for jazz and fusion, but also rock, pop, and blues.





piezo system for \$1,895), sits somewhere in the middle with its jazz-approved semi-hollow construction, flame-maple top, and surprising range of tones. I tested the Flat Five through a slew of amplifiers, including a 50-watt Marshall JCM 800, a Line 6 Vetta, a Fender Twin Reverb, and a Hughes & Kettner zenTera.

## Construction

The Flat Five sports a single-cutaway body consisting of a maple center block with poplar wings, topped off with a flame-

maple cap. The medium-thick mahogany neck has a fast, satiny feel and boasts a super-tight fit into the unpainted pocket. The robust neck and flat, 16" radius makes even extreme bends a piece of cake.

Cosmetically, the Flat Five exudes a dignified, elegant air. The transparent black finish cools down the maple's flame, and the smoked-chrome pickup covers and black knobs add to the tuxedo vibe. However, a few visual flaws—such as uneven staining on the headstock, smudged bind-

ing on the cutaway, and some flecks of paint inside the f-holes—detract slightly from the guitar's appearance.

## Tones

Hitting an unamplified chord on the Flat Five really shows off the acoustic properties of its semi-hollow body. This guitar is loud, zingy, and resonant. You can feel the maple top vibrating with each strum—particularly on low-voiced chords—and the sparkly, musical top-end gives the Five a cool, piano-like quality.

Plugging the Flat Five into a Twin Reverb provided a good overview of the range of tones offered by its 5-way pickup selector. In position one, the bridge humbucker sounds punchy but a tad polite—it prefers to speak rather than bark. The second position—which activates just the treble coil of the bridge pickup—gives up great, non-shrill funk tones that are surprisingly clucky (definitely not a sound you typically associate with a humbucker instrument).

The middle position activates



The Ratings Game	Tone	Playability	Workmanship	Hardware	Vibe	Value
Godin Flat Five	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥

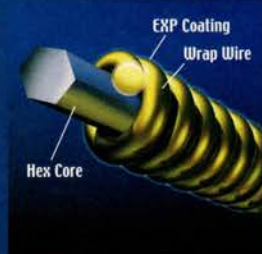


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# Bench Tests

## Thin Is In

both pickups, but due to the Flat Five's 24-fret neck (which brightens the overall response by placing the neck pickup closer to the bridge), the tone isn't as 335-ish as you might think. The two humbuckers yield a nicely balanced sound, but you can't vary the balance because the Five has

just a master volume. The sole volume knob keeps the look uncluttered, but it would be awesome to have access to the tonal colors available with separate volume controls.

The fourth position provides the bass coil of the neck pickup for a warm tone that flirts with Strat-i-ness. This was my favorite choice for bluesy playing. The fi-

## Contact Info

Godin Guitar Company, 19420 Avenue Clark-Graham, Baie D'Urfe, Quebec H9X 3R8; (514) 457-7977; [godinguitars.com](http://godinguitars.com).

nal position is the neck pickup in full-humbucker mode, and this is where the Flat Five earns its jazzy moniker. The vibe is fat and smoky, and rolling the tone knob back even a little brings to mind George Benson-style phrases and Wes-inspired octaves.

## Flat Out

Blasting the Flat Five through the Marshall and various other high-gain amps proved it can do a lot more than a jazz gig. I had no problem getting cool blues tones and classic rock-style power chords, and the Five *really* sings with some volume behind it. Feedback is an issue with any hollow guitar, but even at high gain and volume levels the Five feeds

back in a musical manner with little howling and no squealing. One slight drag: The Five loses a little treble response when you roll down the volume control, making it tougher to go from clean to scream with single-channel amps.

## High Five

The Flat Five looks and sounds unique, and should appeal most to jazz, blues, and fusion players. At 7.7 lbs, this baby won't tweak your back on a long gig, and its flexible pickup wiring provides a wider variety of tones than are usually available from semi-hollow guitars. Factor in its competitive price, and the Flat Five comes up as a strong contender in the thinline market. ■

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**E**lectro-Harmonix was one of the first pedal manufacturers to capitalize on the maverick spirit of stompbox culture. With funky monikers such as Screaming Bird, Rolling Thunder, and Black Finger, EH pedals reeked of individuality and style. The company's latest modulation pedal—the tube-powered Wiggler (\$298 retail/\$199 street)—offers vibrato and tremolo effects awash in EH-style stoniness.

The Wiggler boasts a sheet-metal enclosure, a status LED, and two protruding 12AX7s protected by a metal roll-bar. The device is powered with a 12-volt wall-wart adapter that uses an oddball connector—don't expect to power this puppy with your aftermarket power supply. The controls include volume, intensity, and rate knobs; a vibrato/tremolo switch; and a 4-position mode switch with Looz, Hamm, Acey, and Wurl settings.

When vibrato is selected, the mode switch provides four different EQ textures—each accompanied

by a subtle change in modulation depth. Acey and Wurl are true vibrato settings with seasick warble to spare, and Looz and Hamm yield lush phasing. Hamm is the most extreme option, and it very nearly carries you into Hendrix/Band of Gypsies Uni-Vibe territory.

In tremolo mode, the Wiggler serves up luscious, old-school volume modulation. Again, each mode provides subtle EQ changes, with Hamm being the brightest, and Wurl the darkest. The huge range of the intensity and rate controls makes it easy to dial in everything from classic throb to insane, machine-gun stutter, and the volume control can unleash more than enough output to ensure you get heard. Props to Electro-Harmonix for putting a fresh spin on two classic effects. —DARRIN FOX



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## Bench Tests

# Heaven's Gateway



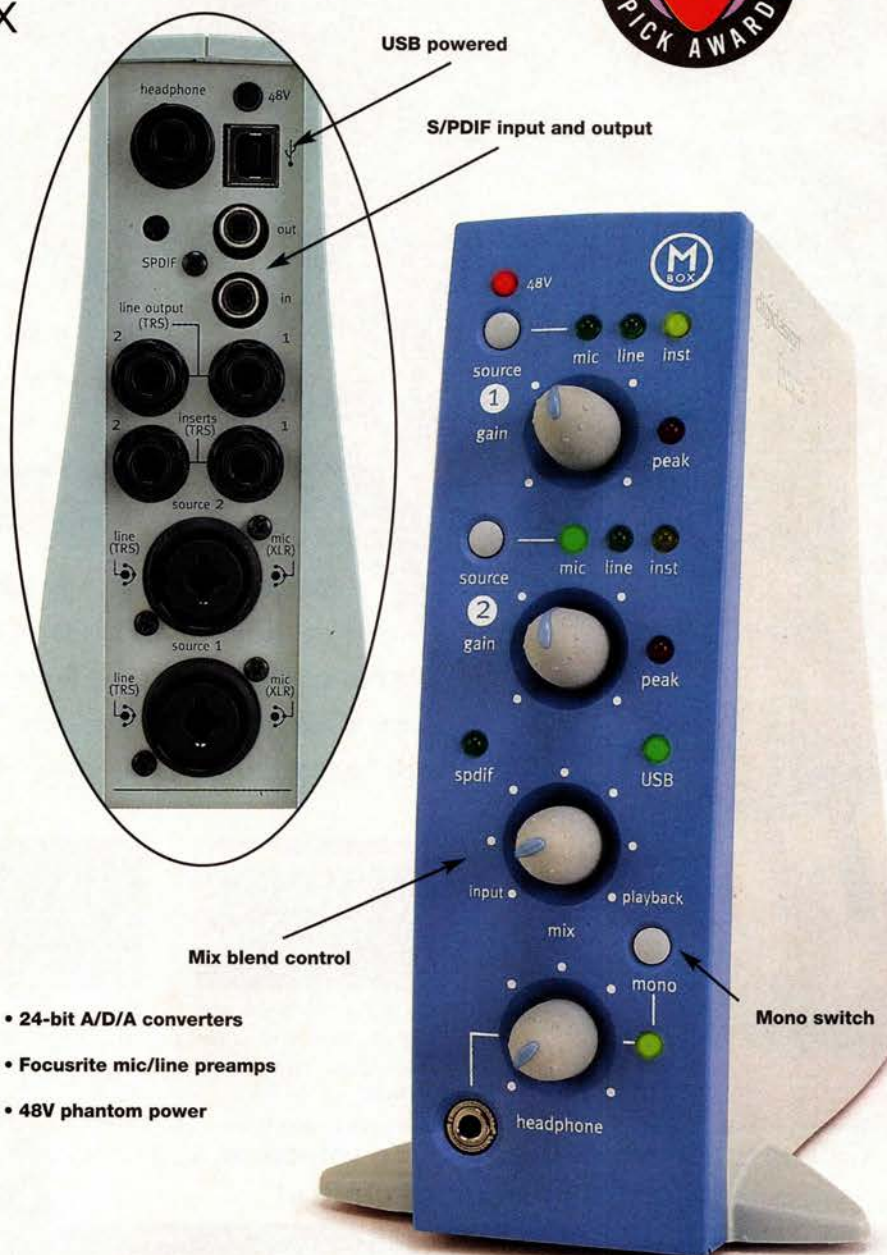
## Digidesign Mbox

By Michael Molenda

**G**uitarists tend to be visceral creatures. We want to translate what's in our hearts and heads with unfettered abandon: feel the neck, hit the string, hear the noise. However, such a feral and instinctual approach to music making is often at odds with the detail-oriented editing palette of hard-disk recorders. And when feel is so critical to how we phrase riffs and rhythms, the latency factor of many digital systems is a right put-off. (Latency is the potentially groove-stifling delay inherent in digital systems as an analog input signal is processed before it can be output.) It's no surprise then, that a fair share of guitarists look to other, more organic options when considering a recording medium for their home studios.

### Snapshot

Digidesign's Mbox (\$495 retail/\$449 street) is a smashing value for computer-based recording systems. You get a mic/line preamp with inserts, Pro Tools LE 5.2 software, RTAS plug-in compatibility, and more. Mbox is a mega setup for stupidly low buckage, and it wins an Editors' Pick Award.

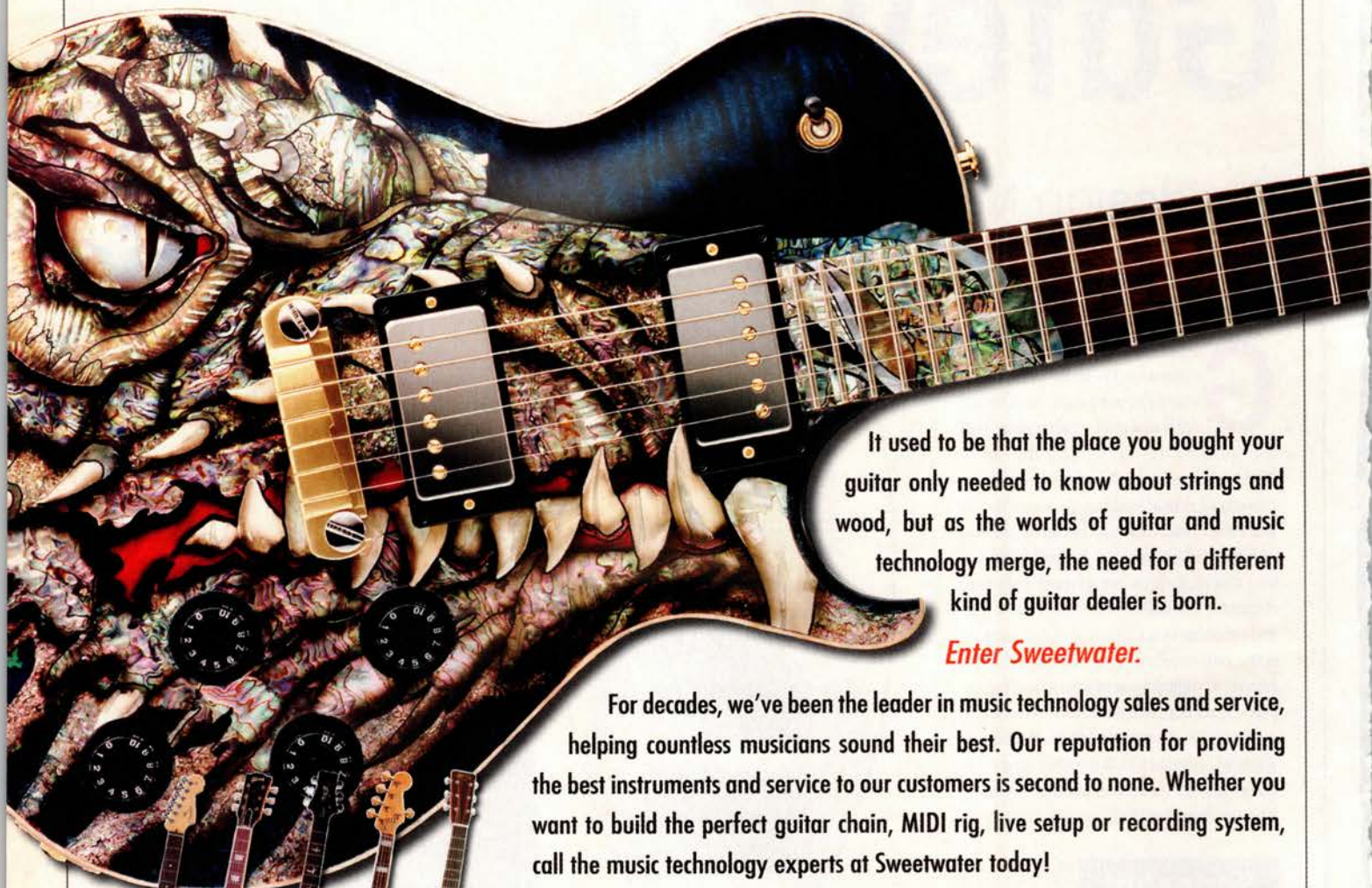


- 24-bit A/D/A converters
- Focusrite mic/line preamps
- 48V phantom power



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# Bench Tests

## Heaven's Gateway

Well, any bitching about digital workstations is now as irrelevant as Spandex. Digidesign's marvelous Mbox (\$499) negates most objections to hard-disk recording with a well-designed and ridiculously affordable system. The package (currently for Macs only) includes a cutesy, yet powerful preamp and Pro Tools LE 5.2 software (24 audio tracks, 128 MIDI tracks, and support for RTAS plug-ins). The only things you need are monitor speakers, microphones, and a Power Mac with a USB port, OS 9.1 or later, 128MB RAM, and a CD-ROM drive. (If you have an older Power Mac, check out digidesign.com to ensure it's still compatible with the Mbox system.) Obviously, all mixing and effects processing can be done via software, so your complete 24-track studio can fit in the corner of a bedroom, on a kitchen table, and even in the back of a Ford Explorer.

Given the compact nature of the Mbox, however, the real kick is marrying the system with a

PowerBook or an iBook. Talk about unfettered! You could stash the whole shebang into a gig bag, and record tracks in rehearsal spaces, hotel rooms, lofts, stairwells, and anywhere you can visualize an interesting acoustic environment. That's how I tested this marvel—I loaded the Pro Tools software into an iBook crammed with 576MB RAM and looked for strange, spacious, or comfortable places to make some noise.

## The Box

The structural integrity of the plastic Mbox is like a computer speaker—meaning you'd better be a nurturing soul when moving the little guy around—but there's a ton of goodies within the mini tower. The two preamps are manufactured by Focusrite, a company known for exquisite sound quality. Two rear-mounted Neutrik connectors accept 1/4" TRS and XLR cables, and front-panel source switches let you choose between mic, line, and instrument levels. You also get switchable 48V phantom power.

The remaining rear-panel

## Contact Info

Digidesign, 2001 Junipero Serra Blvd., Daly City, CA 94014; (650) 731-6300; digidesign.com.

## Kissing Cousins

**Aardvark Q10:** \$999 retail/\$749 street (Mac/Windows)

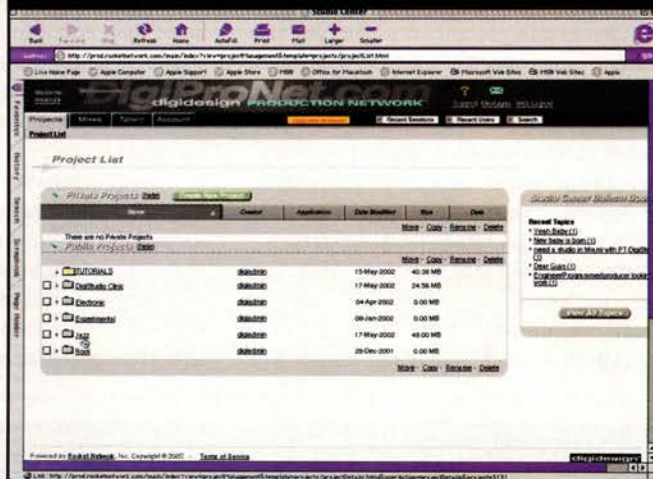
**Echo Gina 24/96:** \$495 retail/\$399 street (Windows)

**EWS 88 MT:** \$799 retail/\$399 street (Windows)

**M-Audio Omni Studio:** \$599 retail/\$429 street (Mac/Windows)

**MOTU 828:** \$795 retail/\$729 street (Mac/Windows)

## Online Collaboration



The DigiStudio project window lets you scope out "public" sessions that you can download and pump up with your thrilling and masterful musical ideas. Go for it!

By relying on tape-cartridge media that could be easily shipped, the Alesis ADAT and Tascam DA-88 first opened up the frontier of collaboration between musicians in different locales. But Digidesign's DigiStudio blows the roof off virtual teamwork by putting the process online. There is a cost for this service (click to digidesign.com for rates), but Mbox owners (and other PT peoples) can opt for a limited free user account to test the waters.

DigiStudio does not offer the cyber equivalent of working side-by-side in a conventional studio because it's currently not real-time. You download a project to your hard disk, work on it at home, and then upload the results to the DigiStudio network. Transferring audio files (or sessions) is easy, and you can trade compressed files that download faster than full-on master-quality files until you or your partner are ready to produce a finished work.

If you want to join a community of Pro Tools users who can lay down just about any instrument you desire—or if you want to make tracks with the cat you met in Morocco last summer—DigiStudio is totally the way to go. This is a brilliant idea that redefines the concept of collaboration. Right now, I'm conspiring to contact ex-BeBop Deluxe guitarist Bill Nelson in England to see if I can convince him to ship me a couple of EBow tracks!

—MM

## The Ratings Game

	Sound	Flexibility	Ease of use	Vibe	Value
Digidesign Mbox	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥



## Heaven's Gateway

connections are a USB output (for plugging the box into your computer), balanced TRS line outputs (for routing signals to a mixer or powered monitors), unbalanced RCA S/PDIF input and output, a 1/4" headphone jack, and TRS inserts for each channel. The inserts are way cool—and a feature that's sometimes ignored on digital mixers and preamps—because you can plug in your favorite compressor (or other effects device) pre-A/D converter and track *with* processing. Of course, you won't be able to delete the processing later (it's recorded with the source sound), but, for some of us, a particular outboard effects device *is* part of our sound. (My

faves are the Joe Meek SC-2 and the Empirical Labs Fatso compressors.)

The knobs and switches on the Mbox's face are surprisingly sturdy, though they're not exactly what you'll find on pro and semi-pro recording hardware. In addition to level knobs for the two mic/line preamps and headphones, there's a mix blend control (more on this critical feature later) and a mono switch (for checking monaural compatibility, evaluating phasing anomalies, and diminishing latency). All controls are well spaced—your fingers won't be brushing against the wrong knob—and handy LEDs alert you to signal peaks, which input source you've selected, whether the USB connection is active, if the channels are set to receive analog or digital

signals, and whether phantom power or mono playback is enabled.

## Working It

Setting up the Mbox is so easy that I won't waste time explaining it. The only annoyances were that I had to keep twisting the box back and forth to plug cables into the rear panel, there was no MIDI input (you'll need an outboard interface), and you can't use both the 1/4" and mini-plug headphone outputs simultaneously (a drag when you're monitoring through headphones and you want to record another performer—such as a singer—and be able to have both of you hear what's going down).

The Focusrite preamps—which are the same circuits used on the company's Platinum Series processors—sound fantastic. They're crystal clear, but there's a hint of coloration that keeps input signals from sounding cold and generic. I can't give you an ultra-technical explanation of the sonic enhancement—let's just say there's a dollop of funk attached to the low mids that gives signals a bit of vibey smack. Using an assortment of mics—including a Neumann U87, a tube Rode, a Shure KSM32, an AKG C414, and a Royer R-121 ribbon—the preamps always captured tight lows with just the right amount of bloom, clear and articulate mids, and shimmering highs. I didn't fuss with EQ adjustments during tracking because the preamps never failed to deliver a pleasing picture of the source sound.

As wonderful as the mic/line preamps are, the bliss-out feature for me was that the Mbox lets you select how you monitor signals. Twist the mix control to hear more of the Mbox input, rather than the playback from Pro Tools, and you grab yourself the thrill of *zero-latency* monitoring. As I like to control the feel and funk of my overdubs as I play them, the ability to diminish latency to the point where it doesn't affect my stylistic idiosyncrasies is *huge*. I'm old-fashioned, so I hate hearing stuff back that's a tad off, and then having to move tracks around in the editing process to "construct" the feel I was going for in the first place. To me, this feature alone is worth \$499.

## Mmmm Good!

For solo-oriented recordists who record one or two tracks at a time, you simply can't beat the Mbox. It's loaded with features, easy to use, and it lets you transfer tracks to more powerful Pro Tools systems if you choose to work in a big studio. If you work primarily with live bands—or construct MIDI masterpieces—you'll need more hardware (such as multi-channel mixers and MIDI interfaces) to make the Mbox a practical tool. But no matter how you make tracks, the Mbox is a tremendous value. You almost feel stupid for *not* buying in. And when you do, your ears will be in a constant state of bliss, your face will radiate contentment, and your tracks will shimmer and shake. This box kicks ass. ■

The advertisement features a dark blue background with a large, stylized 'XLT PRO' logo in the center. Above the logo is the 'Community' brand name in a white box, with 'PROFESSIONAL LOUDSPEAKERS' written below it. Below the main logo, the text 'with IntelliSense™' is displayed. A diagram shows four different speaker configurations: 'XP500/XP509 POLE MOUNT', 'XP530/XP509 POLE MOUNT', 'XP525/XP509 STACK MOUNT', and 'XP502/XP509 POLE MOUNT'. Each configuration shows a small black speaker on top of a larger black subwoofer. To the right of the diagram is a black control box labeled 'XP509 SUBWOOFER'. At the bottom left, text reads: 'For an XLT PRO brochure and information on your local Community Representative, please call 800-523-4934. Refer to code #450.' At the bottom right, text reads: 'See us at the NAMM SUMMER SESSION 2002 BOOTH # 5212'. At the very bottom, the website 'www.loudspeakers.net' is listed.

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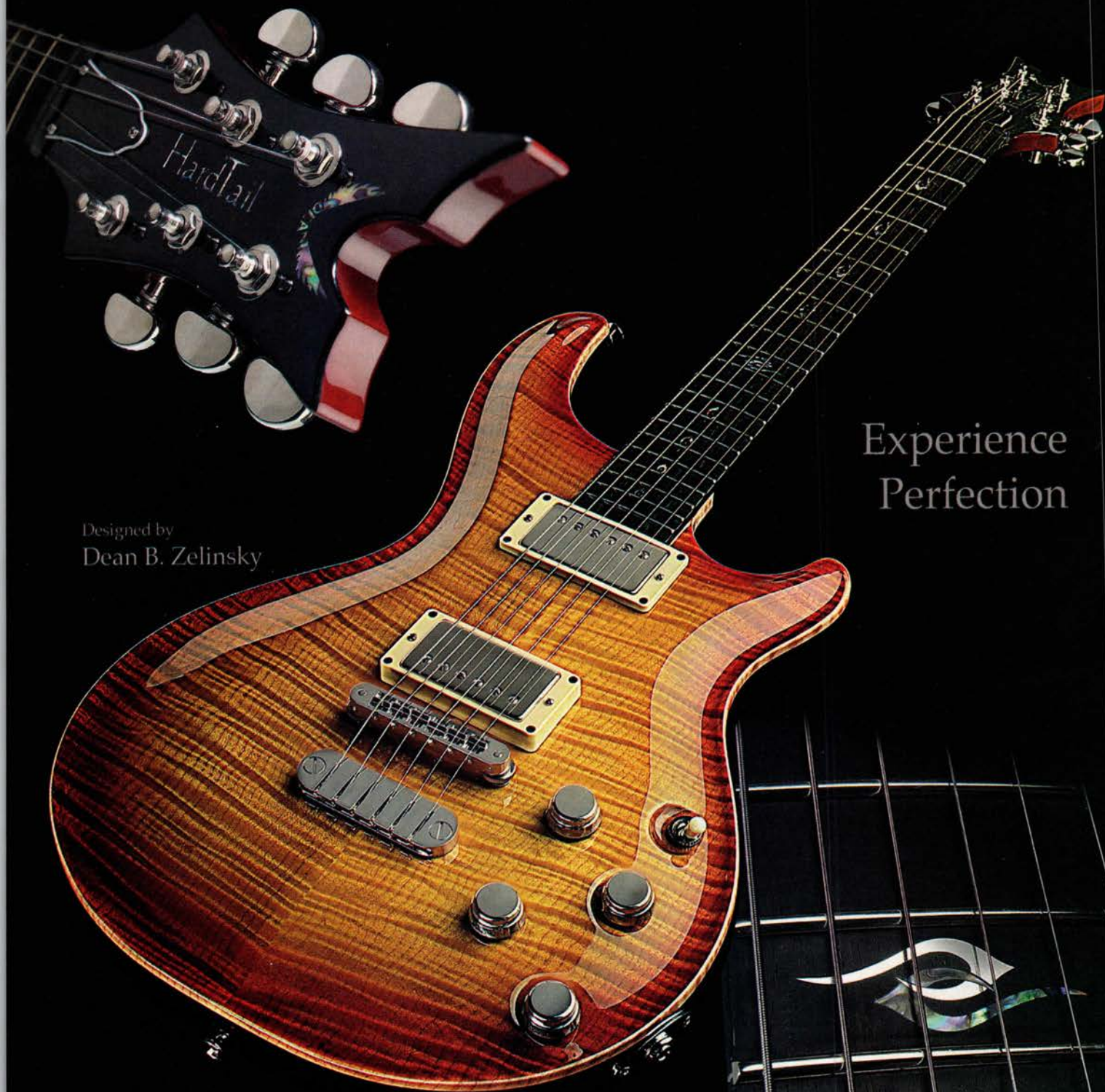


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## Bench Tests

# Livin' Large



## Peavey XXL

By Jude Gold

**W**ith all the hoopla over digital amps, modeling processors, and plug-ins, it almost seems as if the first technology to emulate tube coloration

has faded into history. But analog, solid-state circuits remain a viable and inexpensive alternative to tubes, and, as masterfully demonstrated by Peavey's impressive new XXL head (\$699),

### Snapshot

With its punchy clean sounds and snarling distortion tones, the solid-state Peavey XXL (\$699 retail/\$559 street) is a kick-ass alternative to costlier multi-channel tube heads. The XXL wins an Editors' Pick Award.

Chrome-plated brass knobs



Voicing switches

Damping switch

Power selector (100-, 50-, 25-watts)



Effects loop with level switch

Preamp-out/ power amp-in jacks

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Channel selector



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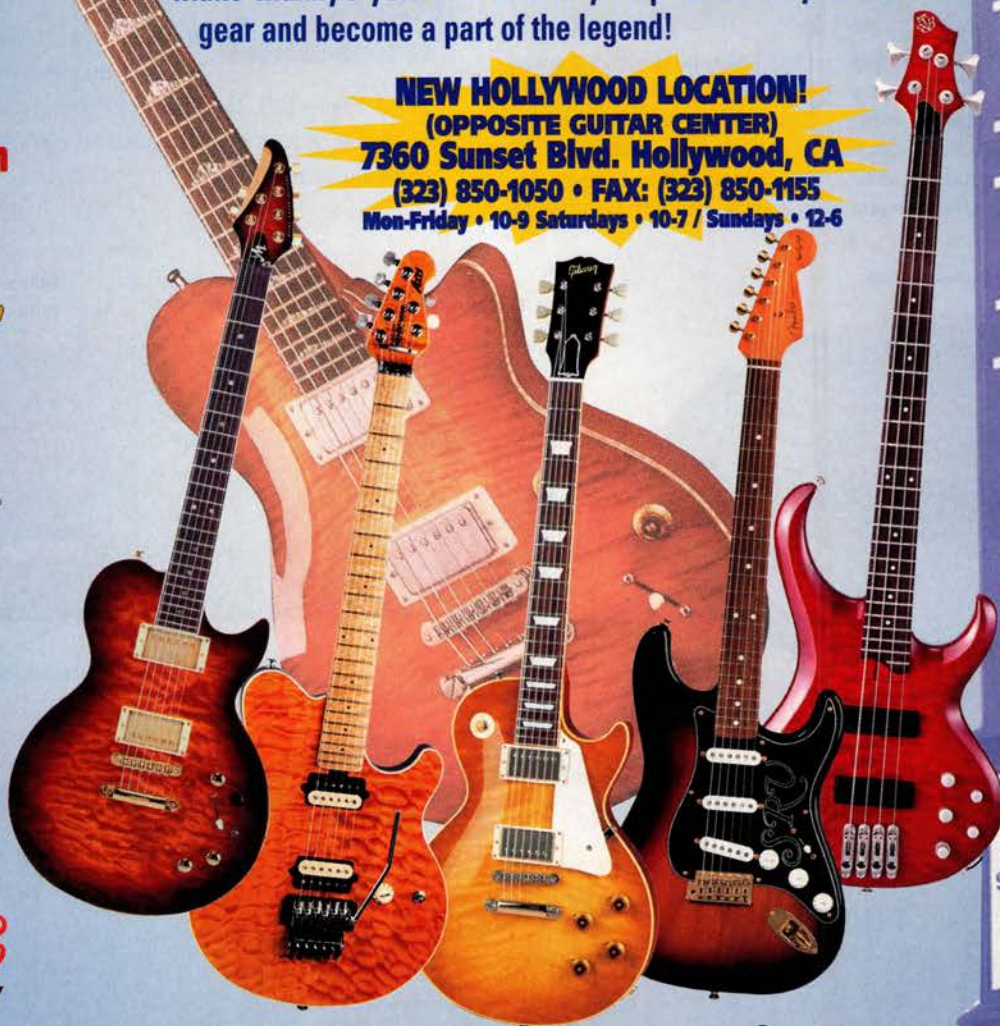
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# Bench Tests

## Livin' Large

these designs can totally whup some ass.

The XXL benefits from Peavey's 37 years of experience in solid-state manufacturing and its development of studly tube amps such as the Classic series, the Van Halen-approved 5150, and the new, "mud flap girl"-

adorned XXX head. The XXL also features the latest—and warmest sounding—version of the company's TransTube technology. The result is a three-channel amp that delivers scorching lead sounds and bone-crushing hard rock and nü-metal tones. The real surprise, however, is that the XXL also serves up a host of blues, rock, old-school metal,



The XXL's included footswitch lets you switch channels and activate the effects loop.

and surf textures, as well as crystal-clean sounds with loads of headroom.

## Front and Center

Each of the XXL's three channels includes a 3-position voicing-switch that dramatically alters the

EQ curve and gain sensitivity. The different voicings allow the XXL to boast a total of nine core tones, and the selections for each channel are as follows:

- Clean: Warm, Modern, Vintage.
- Lead: High Gain, British, Classic.
- Ultra: Ultra, Modern, Crunch.

## Contact Info

Peavey Electronics Corp., 711 A Street, Meridian, MS 39301;  
(601) 483-5365; peavey.com.

The Ratings Game		Tone	Workmanship	Features	Vibe	Value
Peavey XXL		★★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥

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## Livin' Large

To further your tone-tweaking forays, each channel also has an independent EQ section.

The Ultra channel provides three *active* tone controls—Bottom, Body, and Edge—that can boost or cut a preset center frequency.

Passive EQ sections (subtractive circuits that can only cut a selected frequency) are included on the Clean and Lead channels to deliver the response of conventional tone controls.

The remaining front-panel features are a master volume control, and an excellent digital reverb that's capable of emulating surf-improved spring 'verb.

## Rear View

The rear panel includes dual 1/4" speaker jacks, an effects loop (with a 2-position switch to accommodate the different output levels of typical rack and stompbox effects), a preamp-out jack (for sending a line-level signal to mixers, recorders, and power amps), a power amp-in jack (for feeding external line-level signals into the XXL's output stage), and a 3-position power switch that lets you operate at 25, 50, or 100 watts.

Lastly, a 3-position Damping switch lets you select how tightly the XXL controls the cone motion of a speaker, which, in turn, can affect dynamic response. The XXL sounds most musical with the damping set to Loose, which allows the speaker cones to vibrate freely—and push more

air—as the input signal diminishes. The resulting effect is a deep, Marshall-esque *wump*—especially when you palm-mute your guitar strings at higher volumes. If you want sharper, but more nasal mids, set the damping to Medium or Tight.

## Footswitching

The XXL's included footswitch is serviceable at best. For starters, there are three switches on a housing that's really only big enough for two. It's tricky switching in and out of the Clean channel without also hitting either the Effects Select (which turns the loop on and off) or Lead/Ultra buttons. It also would have been nice if the cable wasn't hardwired to the pedal, as a fatal smack inflicted upon the 7-pin connector (or a busted cable) may mean replacing the entire footswitch. (The metal footswitches used on Peavey's XXX and 5150II amps feature detachable cables.)

## Channel Surfing

I explored every tonal nook and cranny of the XXL with a variety of guitars—including a '72 Fender Strat, PRS and Hamer solidbodies, and an MJ Roadster Baritone—and the head plugged into a Marshall 4x12 cabinet. Practically every channel and voicing proved to be toothy and musical—especially when the amp's muscular power section (which is based on a Peavey Bandit) was pushed hard. The tone seemed to get warmer as the amp got louder, and there was little evidence

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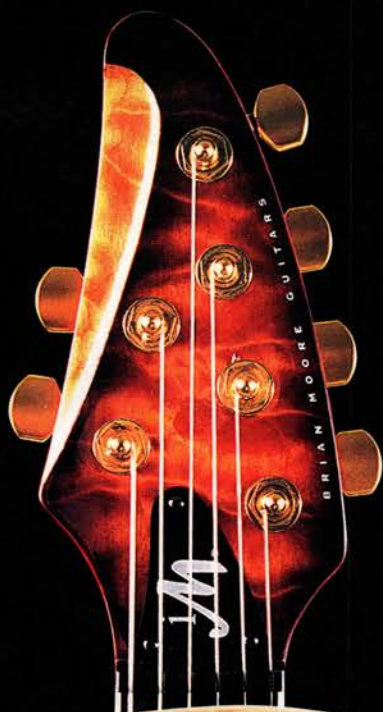
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## Livin' Large

of the brittleness that plagues some solid-state amps. And while the XXL doesn't capture the flute-like overtones of a nicely broken-in tube head, it comes astonishingly close.

The Clean channel offered surprising sparkle, although maxing the gain in search of some breakup resulted in skull-popping mids. This is where the voicing and power switches came to the rescue. I simply set the Clean channel's voicing to Warm, cut the output power to 25 watts, and cranked the level to tap the XXL's fat grind at roadhouse-friendly volumes.

For distortion lovers, the XXL is a smorgasbord of crunch. With the Ultra channel's volume

## Kissing Cousins

**Carvin SX200H:** \$299 direct

**Crate GFX2200HT:** \$779 retail/  
\$549 street

**Hughes & Kettner Tour Reverb Head:**  
\$649 retail/\$449 street

**Marshall AVT150H:** \$999 retail/  
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**Tech 21 Trademark 200:**  
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and gain controls dialed just halfway up on the Modern voicing, chords began sustaining *before* my pick hit the strings.

If scooped-mid mayhem isn't your objective, the Lead channel produces great tones that cover everything from unchained, Van Halen-like distortion to raunchy Ritchie Blackmore textures. I got my favorite lead sound from this channel by selecting the Crunch voicing, dialing each tone control to its two o'clock position, setting the gain at 12 o'clock, and cranking both volume knobs. The tone had abundant distortion, but it wasn't mushy—there was plenty of clarity and backbone.

## X Factor

From barroom boogie to arena-rock anthems, the XXL delivers the goods. This amp watches your back no matter whether you're classic rocking or spewing aggro metal, or dipping between stylistic genres. The tonal control is superb, many of the XXL's sounds will bring a smile to your lips and fire to your pick.

The XXL certainly stands on its own as a sonic monster, but factor in the features and the price, and you've got one tremendous value proposition. If you're seeking a three-channel amp of *any* pedigree, give the XXL a fair shot. This baby is fierce enough to have some 6L6s, 12AX7s, and EL34s fearing for their jobs.



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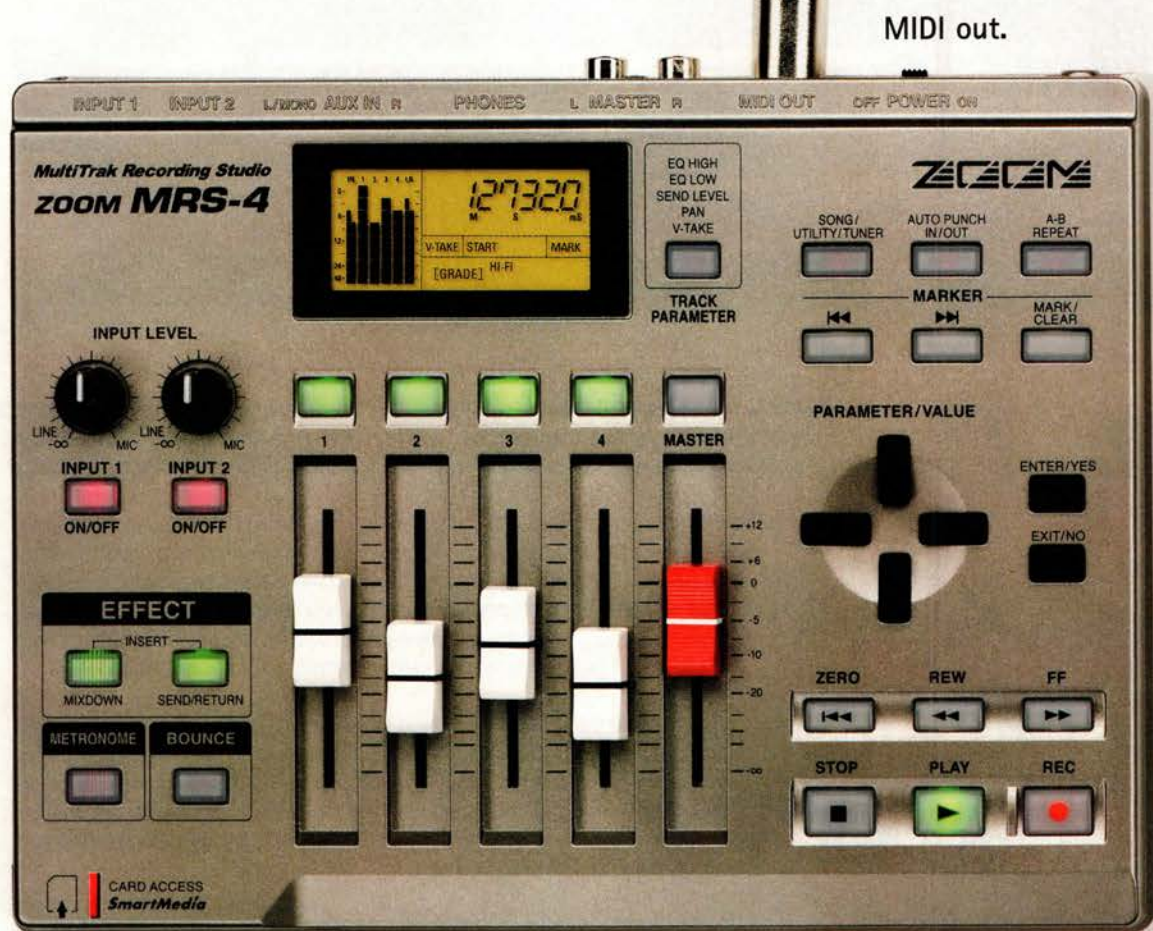
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## Bench Tests

# Fang Master

## ESP Viper-100

By Michael Molenda

**E**ver been drawn to a beautiful person whose cruel smile offered just the slightest hint of the hurt circus they'd inflict upon you? Well, that's also the seductive and deadly calling card of the ESP Viper-100 (\$499). This rapturous mixture of black hardware and lethal curves makes the Viper alluring, yet it has the heart of a street-punk mutha aching for mayhem. Sic the Viper on a raging amp, and you'll unleash massive distortion tones with enough booty to tilt the Richter Scale. Not into moving earth? Then snap the pickup selector to the bridge position and you'll slice through band *and* audience with a blissfully terrifying kerrang. The Viper-100 is not for the meek, but, well—who cares? To steal a phrase from the superheroic Tick, "This solidbody is a *weapon!*"

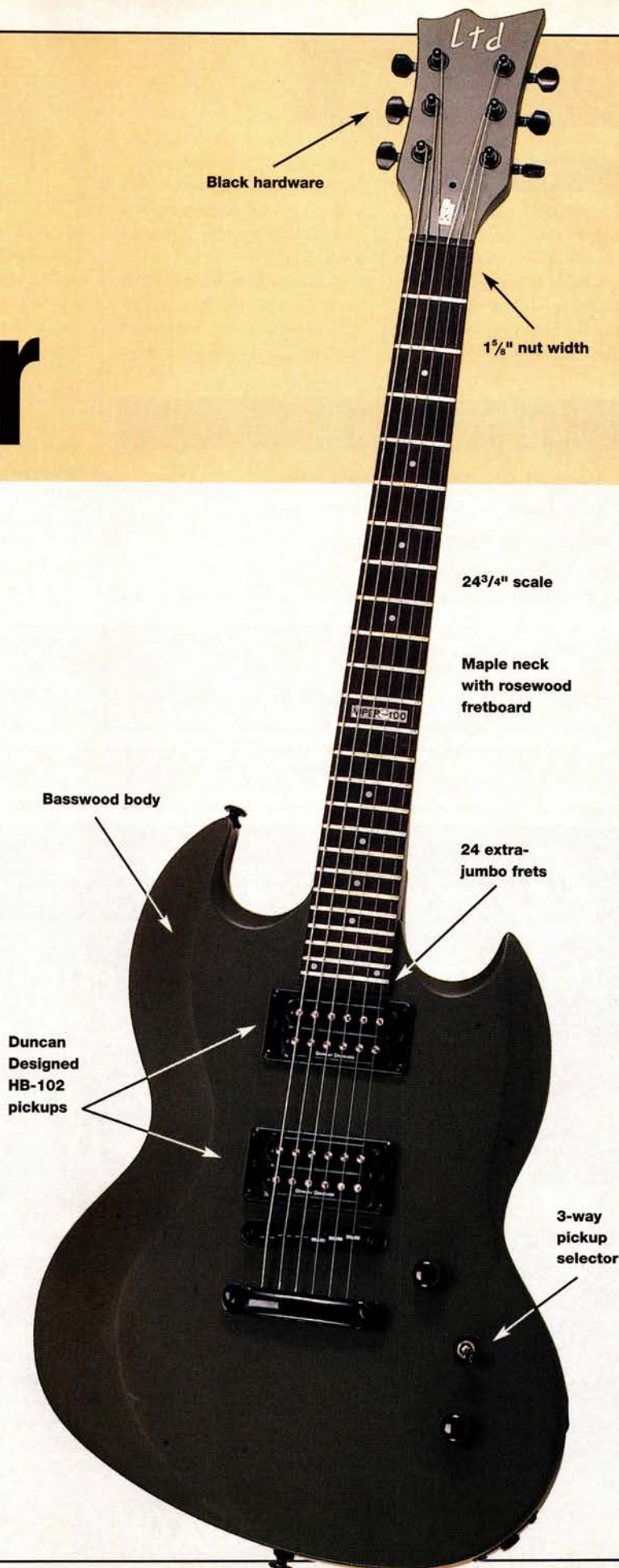
### Skin

The Korean-made Viper—which is part of ESP's LTD Series—seems strong enough to withstand a pummeling by a super villain. The vibey black hardware is mounted securely, and the militaristic green-satin finish is flawless. Unlike some budget-priced guitars, the finish also adorns the back of the neck—a quality detail that not only enhances the look of the Viper, but also its playability. Run your hand down the neck, and

### Snapshot

The sleek ESP Viper-100 (\$499

retail/\$349 street) puts a fabulously vicious spin on the classic SG silhouette, and it's designed to spew huge distorted tones that rumble and bite.





# Bench Tests

## Fang Master

you'll feel as if it's plunging down a water slide. Every move I made—from descending scales to cascading arpeggios to chord-lead playing—soared effortlessly across the fretboard. Playability is further augmented by the

Viper's lightly polished, super-jumbo frets. They're well shaped, well seated, and the ends are very nice. Simply put, this guitar is a joy to play.

I had to look hard for any workmanship glitches on this lean, mean machine, and I found just two: The volume knob had a

## Contact Info

ESP, 10903 Vanowen St., Unit A, North Hollywood, CA 91605;  
(800) 423-8388; espguitars.com.

spotty rotation (it would get stuck here and there), and the neck pocket wasn't super solid (the bass side was tight, but I could stick a business card between the gap on the treble side).

## Hissssss

Although the Viper can deliver some pleasant clean timbres, the guitar ain't about sparkle. My fave undistorted tone was achieved by plugging the Viper into a Vox AC15, selecting the bridge pickup, and turning the tone knob back a tad to diminish some of the gui-

tar's snappy mids. This move produced a stark, steel-like tone that blended nicely with modulation effects, but I still wouldn't reach for the Viper as a primary source of shimmer. (On the other hand, the guitar produces a very loud and bright tone when strummed acoustically, so I had some big fun miking the *unplugged* Viper with a small-diaphragm condenser to get clean sounds.)

Crank up the gain, however, and the Viper morphs into the king of snakes. The brutality and *diversity* of distortion colors it

## Kissing Cousins

**Epiphone G-400:** \$599 retail/\$359 street

**Fender Double Fat Tele Deluxe:** \$548 retail/\$329 street

**Ibanez AX120:** \$399 retail/\$295 street

**Squier S-65:** \$308 retail/\$169 street

The Ratings Game	Tone	Playability	Workmanship	Hardware	Vibe	Value
ESP Viper-100	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★

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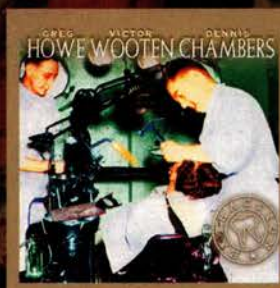
## UFO-SHARKS SH-1156

SHARKS proves that Michael Schenker, Phil Mogg, Pete Way and Aynsley Dunbar are at the top of their game and that the still popular group has lost none of it's fire over the years. Schenker's incredible guitar solos and Mogg's classic voice combine for one of Rock's finest musical unions.



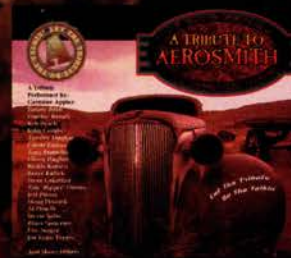
## GHS 3-FRANK GAMBALE-STUART HAMM-STEVE SMITH TC-4023

GHS 3 features Guitarist Frank Gambale (Chick Corea's Electric Band), Drummer Steve Smith (Vital Information, Steps Ahead) and bassist Stu Hamm (Joe Satriani, Steve Vai) who fuse forces to create their most intense musical statement to date. All legends on their respective instruments, this record showcases their playing in a heavy ensemble environment, yet leaves plenty of room for each player to stretch his soloing abilities to the outer limits.



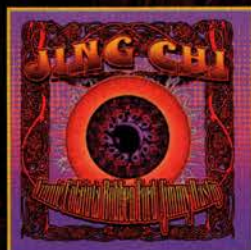
## GREG HOWE-EXTRACTION TC-4024

Greg Howe's album EXTRACTION features the world renowned rhythm section of Victor Wooten and Dennis Chambers and delves deeply into the depths of hardcore fusion. Howe's guitar abilities have been boggling minds for over a decade but have yet to be paired with a rhythm section of this caliber. Each musician is arguably the best on their instrument and as you might expect, this record breaks new ground for the genre.



## ONE WAY STREET-A TRIBUTE TO AEROSMITH SH-1154

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JING CHI TC-4021 Jing Chi is a collaboration with drummer VINNIE COLAIUTA, renowned guitarist ROBBER FORD, (Sting, Frank Zappa, Steely Dan) and bassist JIMMY HASLIP (Yellow Jackets, Tommy Bolin, Steely Dan) with special guest appearances by BRIAN AUGER and STEVE TAVAGLIONE, brings to mind the essence of classic power trios crossed with an adventurous sophistication yet leaving room for each player's phenomenal soloing abilities.



## VITAL INFORMATION-SHOW 'EM WHERE YOU LIVE TC-4022

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## RACER X-SNOWBALL OF DOOM SH-1155

acer X returns with their first new live release since reforming. The original lineup, guitarists PAUL GILBERT, vocalist JEFF MARTIN, bassist JOHN ALDERETE and drummer SCOTT TRAVIS continue to create great hard rock releases. The band performs highlight from their incredible catalog of original material plus an inspired cover of "Godzilla."



## VINNIE MOORE DEFYING GRAVITY TC-4019

This CD is a stunning instrumental barrage of outstanding musicianship and is rooted deeply in the progressive neo-classical style that generated a legion of loyal fans. Joined by former Journey drummer Steve Smith (Journey, Vital Information), bassist Dave LaRue (The Dregs) and keyboardist David Rosenthal (Rainbow), Vinnie reconnects with the music that established him as a guitar virtuoso.



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## Fang Master

delivers with one volume control and one tone knob is pretty astounding. The pickups seem voiced to uncork a low-frequency emphasis, so you can get low and nasty enough to rumble with 7-stringers by choosing the neck pickup and letting the bass blossom. That approach can be a little *too* subterranean for stout low-string riffs, but the dual-pickup position serves up a wonderful wallop combined with a rapier-like edge.

Going for the throat is as easy as knocking the switch to the bridge pickup. The full-on midrange and treble flavors are aggressive and clanky, and they possess enough cutting power to saw through a battleship. The tone knob is your "mercy control"—turn it all the way up to conquer, and notch it down for benevolent rule. The thrill of power is almost unnerving.

## Bite

Don't make the mistake of assuming the Viper-100 is a one-trick pony simply because it adores high-gain tones. Okay, you might not use this baby for a jazz or Americana gig, but the tremendous palette of distortion and overdrive colors it puts out can add dimension to any style of aggressive rock, from nü-metal to '60s garage. If you love getting in people's faces, the Viper-100 gives you many ways to snap the masses to attention.

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## Bench Tests

# Big Bottle Boogie

## Bad Cat Hot Cat and Siegmund Midnight Blues Amps

By Darrin Fox

**T**he "big bottle" EL34 power tube may be a staple of the British amp sound, but these two boutique amps prove that such a classic recipe can be recast to honor his-

tory and deliver cutting-edge timbres. The dual-channel Bad Cat Hot Cat (\$2,959) draws its inspiration from classic Vox circuits, but it's also the company's premiere foray into modern high-

gain sounds. The Siegmund Midnight Blues (\$2,295) is a single-channel amp that takes its cue from mid- to late-'60s plexi Marshalls, but it adds the ability to tweak tube bias.

### Bad Cat Hot Cat

Bad Cat designer (and former Matchless guru) Mark Sampson typically focuses on producing amps that deliver clean tones with richness and character. He has

### Bad Cat Hot Cat

- Dual EL34 output tubes
- Switchable rectifier (tube/solid-state)
- Dual inputs
- 30 watts





disliked the tone of most high-gain amps because the pick attack often sounds, in his words, "like a sledgehammer hitting a rock." The Hot Cat's high-gain channel (with an edge control that diminishes high-frequency content) is an attempt to increase tonal flexibility for distortion timbres.

The amp's construction is stellar. A heavy-duty birch cabinet houses a modified Celestion Vintage 30 speaker, and the two-tone covering is immaculate. The copper grille cloth is a nice touch.

Meticulous point-to-point wiring resides within the Hot Cat's tank-like steel chassis, and all components are chassis mounted for durability. The tube complement consists of four 12AX7s in the pre-amp section, two EL34s in the power section, and a 5AR4 rectifier tube that can be bypassed from the class A circuit (via a back-panel switch), in favor of a solid-state rectifier.

### Hear Kitty, Kitty

The Hot Cat's clean channel

## Snapshot

The Bad Cat Hot Cat (\$2,959

retail/street N/A) is the company's first

high-gain amp, while Siegmund's Midnight Blues (\$2,295 retail/\$2,000 street) projects a plexi-Marshall vibe. Both of these EL34-powered machines offer hand-built construction and high-grade components, and both win Editors' Pick Awards.

gives you a single tone control—a brilliance knob—but the basic sound is absolutely gorgeous. I strummed an open C chord and was immediately inspired by a stunning, airy timbre. Upper-mid and high-end tones are rich and

detailed, and no matter how loud I cranked the amp, the overall sound was smooth and musical. The clean tone definitely cuts through a band mix—and dimming the channel brings in some growl and sustain—but it never gets



### Siegmund Midnight Blues

- Effects loop with drive and mix controls
- Adjustable bias
- Dual EL34 output tubes
- 50 watts





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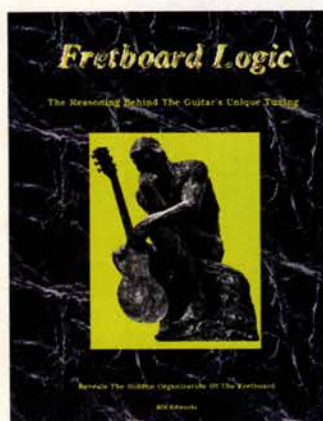
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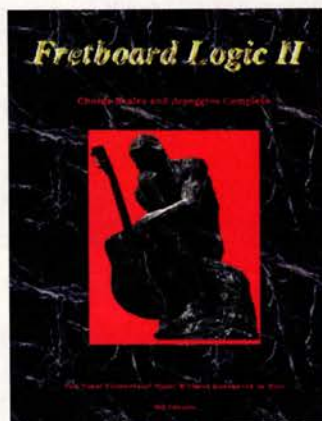
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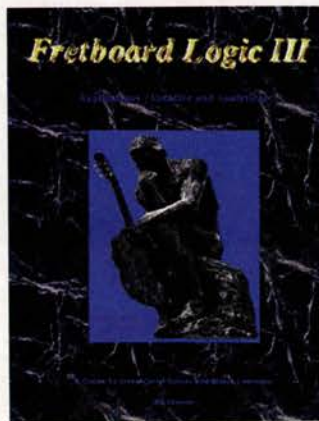
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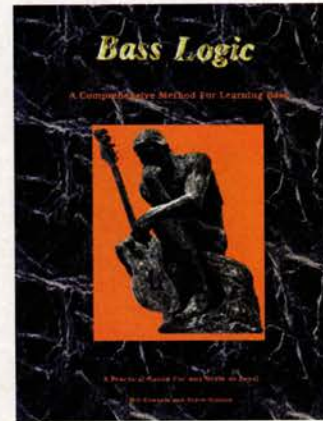
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# Bench Tests

## Big Bottle Boogie

shrill or ragged.

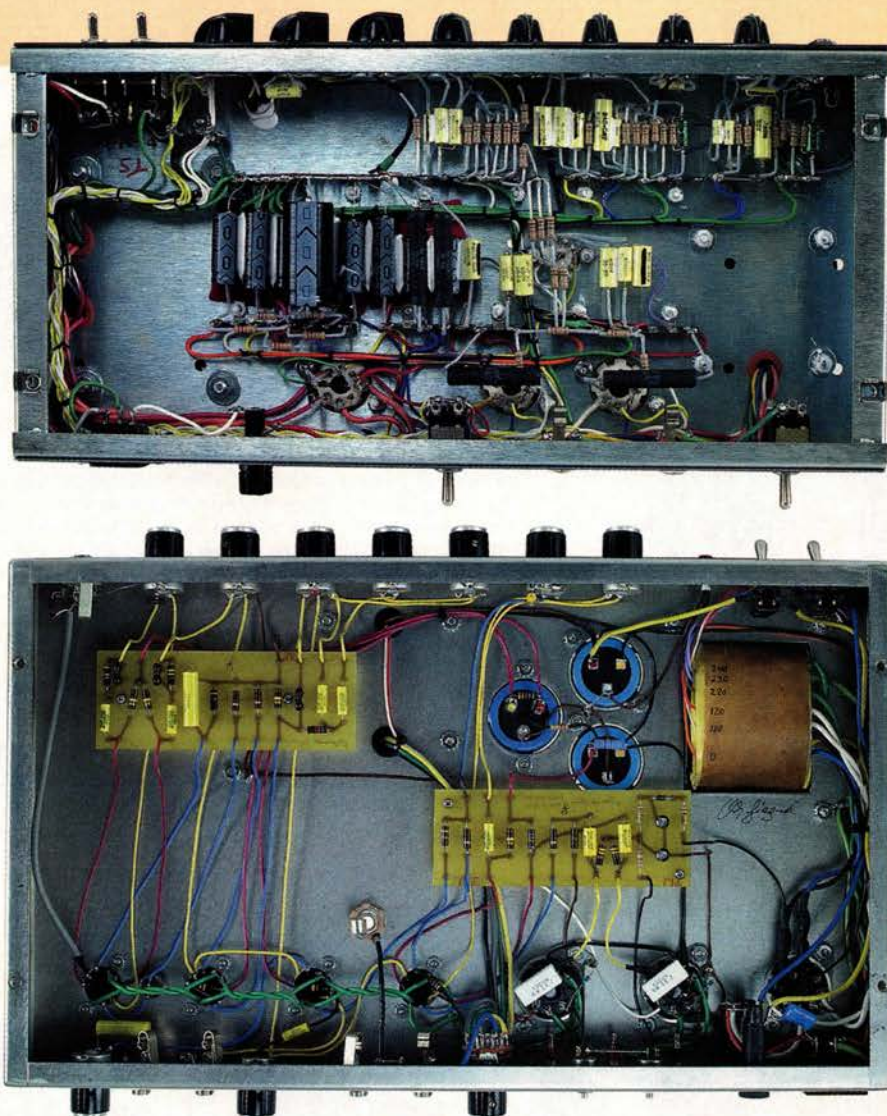
The gain channel offers more tonal options with its bass, treble, edge, gain, level, and master volume controls. I was amazed at the musicality of this channel's preamp distortion—everything from medium crunch to a howling woman tone was easily achievable with every test guitar at any volume level. Some preamps can sound buzzy and almost mechanical when the master is turned down, but the Hot Cat's low-volume mode deftly emulates the natural roar of a cranked amp.

You can switch between the Hot Cat's two channels using an optional A/B/Y box, but, for me, the most thrilling feature is the amp's ability to combine its two channels for an absolutely mind-boggling palette of tones. You can set the clean channel super bright and slicing, dial the gain side for midrange-heavy honk, and then blend the two for a distorted tone that has a ton of clarity and attack. And that's just one option for marvelous tonal mixtures. When you combine the sheer range of its luscious sounds with its unparalleled construction, the Hot Cat is a *bad* cat, indeed.

## Siegmund Midnight Blues

Chris Siegmund paid his dues as a custom guitar builder and tube-amp repairman before he began handcrafting his own amps in 1998. His newest offering, the 2x12 Midnight Blues (\$2,295), offers British-style tone, powerful sound-sculpting features, and exquisite construction. A blue Tolex covering drapes the flawlessly built cabinet—which is loaded with a Celestion Greenback and a Brown Soun Tone Tubby (Weber VSTs are also available)—and a meticulously handwired circuit hides within a brushed and chrome-plated steel chassis. There's just one ergonomic glitch: The recessed front panel and tiny lettering make it near impossible to see the controls unless the amp is positioned at eye level.

The Midnight Blues also comes with a re-





The Hot Cat (above) sports a point-to-point wired circuit on terminal strips. The Midnight Blues is also handwired, but with board-mounted components.

movable panel so the cabinet can operate in an open-back configuration. Unfortunately, there's no handle to aid in detaching the back panel, so you're forced to pry it off with a screwdriver after you remove the screws—a move that mars the covering. (Siegmund tells us that ribbon latches have been added to

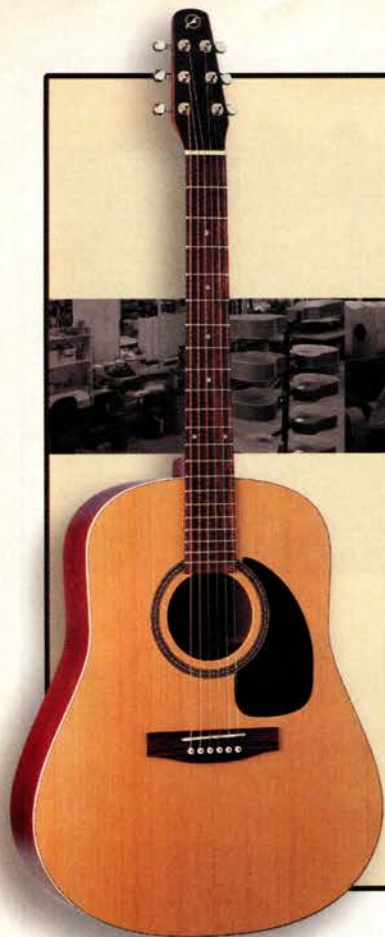
solve this problem.)

A key feature of the Midnight Blues is an external bias adjustment—not just for the output tubes, but for the first preamp tube, as well. According to Siegmund, you can drive the preamp tube hotter, or use a different tube (such as a 12AT7 or a 12AY7) and experiment with the bias

The Ratings Game		Tone	Workmanship	Features	Vibe	Value
Bad Cat Hot Cat		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Siegmund Midnight Blues		★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ♥♥♥♥♥





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# Bench Tests

## Big Bottle Boogie

for different tones. Like the Hot Cat, the Midnight Blues lets you choose between solid-state or tube rectifiers, however, the amp's intelligent power supply simply provides a standard socket that can accommodate a variety of rectifier tubes (5R4, 5U4, 5AR4) or a special plug that activates an internal solid-state rectifier. An added feature is the amp's ability to switch automatically to the solid-state rectifier in the event of rectifier tube failure.

## Sieg Tones

The Midnight Blues reeks of classic plexi-Marshall vibe. By turning the drive and gain controls halfway and cranking the master volume, I was in Clapton/Bluesbreakers territory with a fat, singing tone rich in midrange fang. At low-volume operation, the preamp distortion tends to get unfocused and fizzy, but cranking the master volume elicits an amazingly tight and focused sound with a snappy bottom end. The full-out tone is marvelous, but the Midnight Blues is loud—*really* loud.

The EQ is tastefully voiced with no extreme sweeps one way or the other. The slight range didn't pose any problems, though, because the basic tone is happening for both humbucker and single-coil guitars. I never needed serious EQ surgery. Although the "open-back" option is handy, don't expect to transform the Midnight Blues' throaty punch into airy shimmer. In fact, the amp seems voiced specifically for the closed-back configuration—dump the back, and the Midnight Blues lacks the projection and thump.



The Hot Cat's rear panel has a rectifier selector, a pair of speaker jacks, and an impedance switch.



The Midnight Blues offers external bias and balance adjustments, and an effects loop with drive and mix controls.

What blew me away the most, however, was the Midnight Blues' dynamic character. I went from a Paul Kossoff-esque wail to a chiming clean tone, simply by backing off my guitar's volume control. Sure, many amps clean up when you do this, but the Siegmund

does it *exceptionally* well. An amp that can nail two tonal extremes so easily makes you wonder if you'll ever need channel switching. The Midnight Blues truly deserves its name—it can evoke pain, sorrow, joy, and bravado. This is one soulful amp.



## Tech Talk: The EL34

The Mullard company introduced the EL34 in 1953, and the tubes quickly became favorites in hi-fi circles with companies such as Marantz and Dynaco. Because EL34s were longer than most other audio power tubes, they were called "big bottles." When Marshall supplanted early versions of their JTM 45s (which originally ran on 6L6s) with EL34s in 1965, a legendary sound was born, and the EL34 became synonymous with "British tone." —DF

## Kissing Cousins

**Marshall Bluesbreaker combo:** \$1,800 retail/  
\$1,260 street (reviewed Aug. '92)

**Matchless Chieftain:** \$2,749 retail/\$2,500 street (reviewed Dec. '95)

**Mesa/Boogie F-50:** \$999 retail/street N/A

## Contact Info

**Bad Cat Amplifiers**, 2621 Green River Rd., Ste. #105,  
Corona, CA 92882; (909) 808-8651; badcatamps.com.

**Siegmund Guitars & Amplifiers**, (818) 353-5558;  
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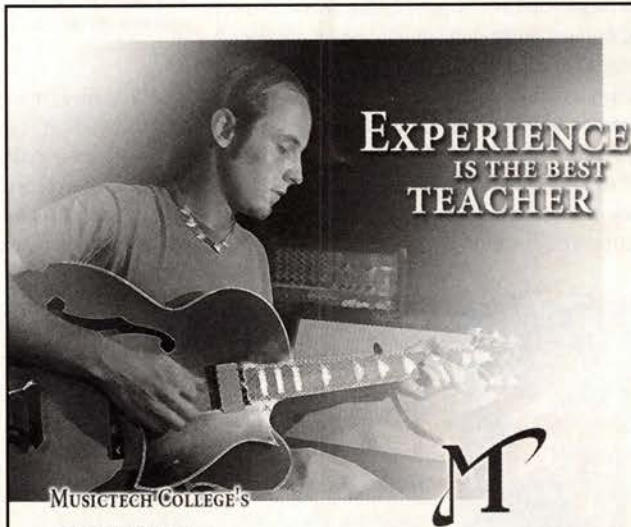
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## Artinger Semi-Hollow

By Art Thompson

**Y**ou might assume that anyone making high-end guitars must have been practicing his or her craft for decades, but witness this thinline gem made by 25-year-old luthier Matt Artinger. Judging by the outstanding workmanship of the Semi-Hollow (\$3,200), Artinger must have been working with pin routers and forstner bits while his friends were still playing with marbles and Mr. Potato Head.

The Semi-Hollow's chambered mahogany body is loaded with fine details such as a hand-carved flamed-maple top, beautiful binding work, and a flawless caramel-burst finish that shows off the natural glow of the woods. Stabilized by two carbon-fiber rods, the mahogany set neck is topped with a 25"-scale ebony board that features 22 mirror-polished frets and subtle, pearl-dot position markers. A polished ebony facing embellishes the headstock, which is fitted with chrome Schaller M-6 tuners.

Hardware details include flush-mounted Dunlop Strap-Loks, a pair of Duncan Custom '59 humbuckers, and a pristine control cavity that houses 500k $\Omega$  tone and volume pots, a 3-way switch, and carefully bundled wiring. The sculpted tailpiece and compensated bridge are hand carved from ebony.

With its round, medium-thick neck and low action, the Semi-Hollow is a joy to play. The beveled cutaway and unobtrusive heel provide easy access to the highest frets, and bending on the .011-.050 GHS strings couldn't be silkier.

Strummed acoustically, the Semi-Hollow sounds extremely bright—an aspect enhanced by the stainless-steel bridge saddles. This quality carries over to the amplified tones as well, though the humbuckers add some welcome girth. With its fast note attack and detailed voice, the Semi-Hollow is a natural for crisp rhythm playing and bright-edged solos. Rolling back the well-voiced tone knob helps tame the zinginess for creamier leads and chunkier rhythms, and it also allows you to elicit sweet jazz flavors from the neck pickup.

Anyone in the market for a one-of-a-kind instrument should investigate Artinger's custom-order offerings. With their quality and superb attention to detail, Artinger guitars are bang-for-buck winners in the boutique arena. ■

**Artinger Custom Guitars**, 4035 Main Rd. W., Emmaus, PA 18049; (610) 965-0437 [artingerguitar.com](http://artingerguitar.com).





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## Bench Tests

# Premium Ticket

## Goodall Concert Jumbo



By Art Thompson

Since 1972, Hawaii-based Goodall Guitars has been building high-end steel-string flat-tops that rival offerings from boutique builders such as Breedlove, Dana Bourgeois, Collings, Lowden, and Santa Cruz. The Goodall Concert Jumbo (\$3,400 base; \$4,695 as tested with Engelmann spruce top, "bent custom" cutaway, and L.R. Baggs active iBeam pickup system) combines superior tone and playability with tasteful appointments and plenty of eye-catching details.

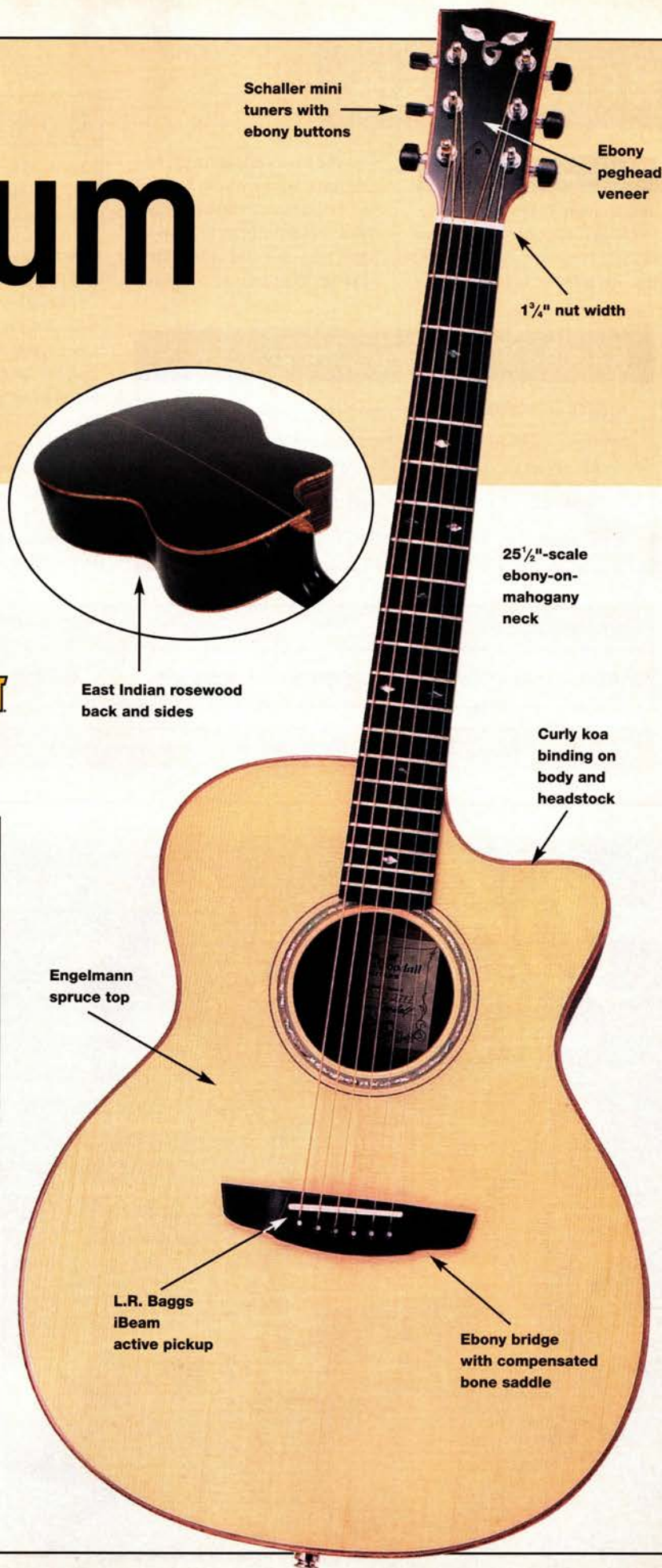
### Construction

You can literally *feel* the quality of this guitar as you run your hand over its gloss-finished body and take in the beautiful koa bindings, mosaic back stripe,

### Snapshot

The Goodall Concert Jumbo

(\$4,695 retail as tested/street price N/A) is a lovely, handmade instrument that offers excellent playability, beautiful woods, and head-turning looks. Equipped with an L.R. Baggs iBeam active pickup system, the Concert Jumbo is well suited for stage use and direct recording. It receives an Editors' Pick Award.





# Bench Tests

## Premium Ticket

and abalone rosette. The neck has a nice, rounded shape, and its satin finish is warm and inviting. The polished frets are shaped

well and their ends seem practically invisible as you slide your hand along the fretboard's edge. Other cool touches include a polished bone nut and saddle, vintage-style diamond position

## Kissing Cousins

**Lowden F-25C:** \$3,500 retail/street N/A

**Martin 18VLJ Laurence Juber Signature Edition:**

\$4,449 retail/street N/A (reviewed May '02)

**Taylor 912 CE:** \$4,538 retail/street N/A

**Santa Cruz HAE:** \$3,600 retail/street N/A

## Contact Info

**James Goodall Guitars**, Box 3542, Kailua-Kona, HI 96745; (808) 329-8237; [goodallguitars.com](http://goodallguitars.com).

markers, and an ebony heel cap and peghead facing.

The CJ's interior reveals carefully shaped wooden parts and a generally clean appearance, despite some excess glue spotted in a few areas. The optional L.R. Baggs i-Beam pickup (\$295) mounted under the bridge plate feeds a discrete, class A preamp hidden inside a cylindrical end-pin jack. Nestled in a small, woven-nylon pouch, the 9-volt battery resides near the neck block.

There are no controls on the instrument, so all tone and volume adjustments must be made externally.

## Playability and Tones

Thanks to the great-feeling neck and spot-on setup, the CJ is a delight to play. The wide fretboard is ideal for fingerstyle or chord-melody playing, and the cutaway (a \$595 option) makes it easy to reach the highest frets. You

*Continued on page 158*

The Ratings Game	Tone	Playability	Workmanship	Materials	Vibe	Value
Goodall Concert Jumbo 	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★

The Rate-O-Meter: Dismal = ♥ —————> Excellent = ★★★★★

# D'Angelico

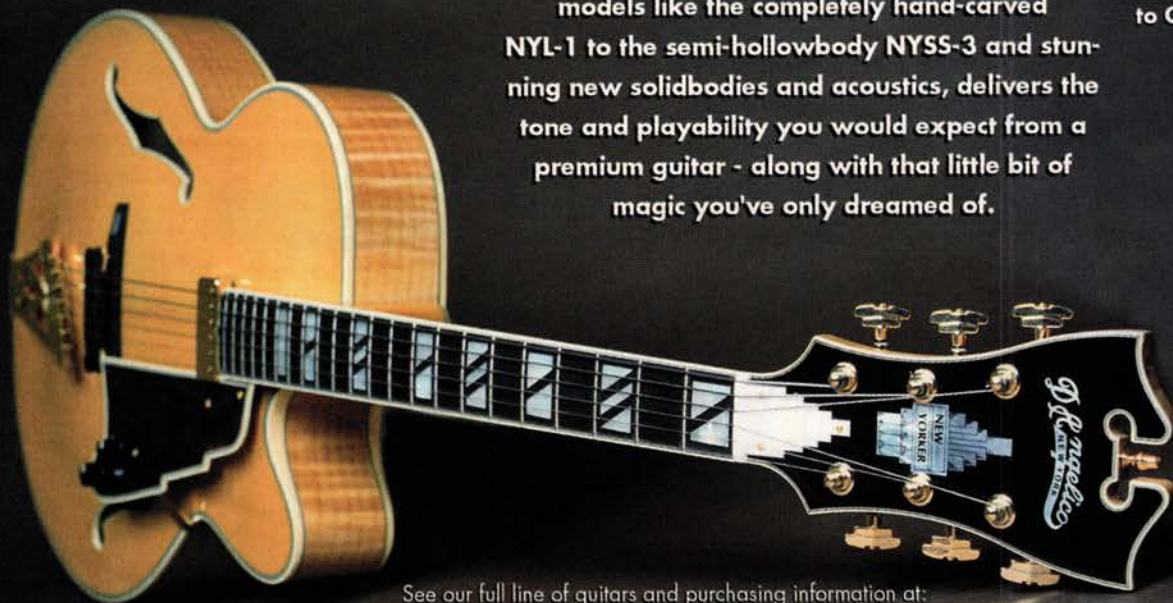
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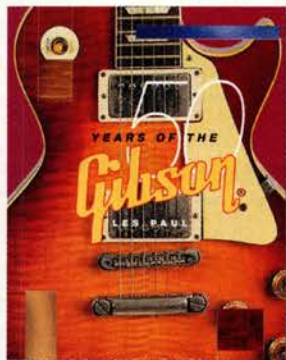


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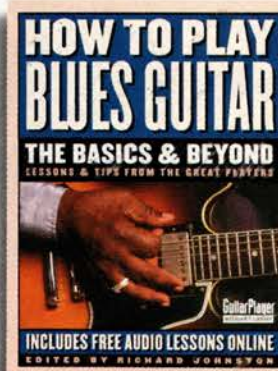
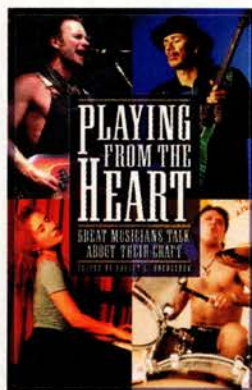
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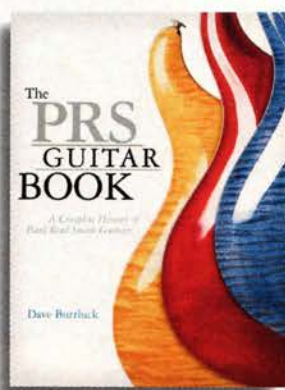
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## Premium Ticket

Continued from page 154

could play this guitar for hours without fatigue, and its broad, rich tones are endlessly satisfying. The lows are deep and strong, and the highs crisp and sweet. Everything is in balance, and even the complex midrange doesn't overshadow the other frequencies. Though its body is large, the CJ isn't about dreadnought-style punch. Rather, this big-sounding instrument fills the space around you with lush, vibrant tones.

### Amplified Sound

To audition the CJ's electric side, I plugged into several acoustic combos (including a Trace Elliot TA100R, an Ultrasound 2x8, and a Hughes & Kettner zenAmp dialed to an acoustic preset), and also documented the direct sound by running straight into a Sony DAT Walkman and a Zoom MRS-1044 hard-disk recorder.

Even through the Trace—which tends to highlight the *worst* qualities of piezo pickups—the Baggs system yielded smooth, balanced tones. I had to strike the strings extremely hard to elicit any of the harsh transients that piezos are famous for. One thing I *did* notice when running into an amp was a persistent overtone that became rather distracting at higher volumes. According to Baggs, this is because the iBeam “hears” not just the strings, but also the guitar's top—which, in this case, was resonating at around 440Hz. Baggs further explained that because the iBeam's preamp is voiced for direct use, running through most acoustic amps (which typically boost the lows and highs while attenuating the mids) will exacerbate the presence of “wolf” tones.

It was another story, however, when recording direct. In this mode, the iBeam captured the CJ's clarity and warmth with astonishing realism. Listening to the playback on headphones, it was easy to believe that the recordings had been made with a quality mic—the sound was *that* airy and dimensional. Quite impressive considering that this test was done without the benefit of Baggs' Para Acoustic D.I. outboard EQ/direct box (\$209) which features a phase-invert button that could be helpful for dealing with those troublesome overtones.

### Bottom Lines

With its fine acoustic tone, superb playability, and top-notch electronics, the Concert Jumbo certainly has a lot to offer. Songwriters and solo players will dig its inspiring tones, and you can rely on it to sound great even when plugged straight into a P.A. or recording console. Given the number of high-end guitars available these days, choosing one to fulfill your dreams is no easy task. Granted, the Concert Jumbo is an expensive proposition, but you could probably play it for a lifetime without feeling a moment of buyer's remorse.

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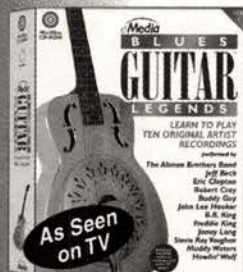


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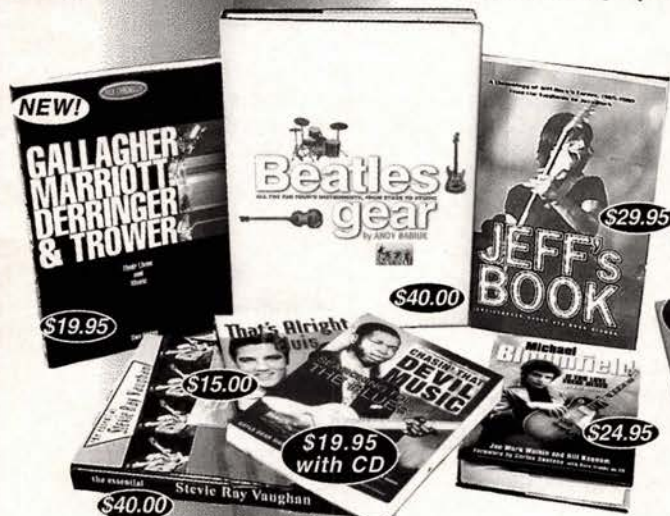
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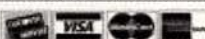


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*It all started as a sort of teenage rivalry...*

I'd slave at the piano for five hours daily. Linda practiced far less. Yet somehow she always shined as the star performer at our school. It was frustrating. *What does she have that I don't?* I'd wonder.

Linda's best friend, Sheryl, bragged on and on to me, adding more fuel to my fire. "You could never be as good as Linda," she would taunt. "Linda's got Perfect Pitch."

"What's Perfect Pitch?" I asked.

Sheryl gloated about some of Linda's uncanny abilities: how she could name *exact tones and chords*—all BY EAR; how she could sing any tone—from *mere memory*; how she could play songs—after just *hearing* them!

My heart sank. *Her fantastic EAR is the key to her success.* How could I ever hope to compete with her?

But it bothered me. Did she *really* have Perfect Pitch? I finally asked Linda point-blank if it was true.

"Yes," she nodded to me aloofly.

But Perfect Pitch was too good to believe. I rudely pressed, "Can I test you sometime?"

"OK," she replied.

**Now she'd eat her words...**

*My plot was ingeniously simple:* When Linda least suspected, I challenged her to name tones—by ear.

I made her stand so she could not see the piano keyboard. I made sure other classmates could not help her. I set up everything perfectly so I could expose her Perfect Pitch claims as a ridiculous joke.

With silent apprehension, I selected a tone to play. (She'll never guess F#!)

I had barely touched the key.

"F#," she said. I was astonished.

I played another tone.

"C," she announced, not stopping to think.

Frantically, I played more tones, skipping here and there all over the keyboard. But somehow she knew the pitch each time. She was *AMAZING!*

"Sing an E♭," I demanded, determined to mess her up. She sang a tone. I checked her on the keyboard—but she was right on!

Now I started to boil.

I called out more tones, trying hard to make them increasingly difficult. Still she sang each note perfectly on pitch.

I was totally boggled. "How in the world do you do it?" I blurted.

"I don't know," she

sighed. And that was all I could get out of her!

The dazzle of Perfect Pitch hit me like a ton of bricks. My head was dizzy with disbelief. Yet from then on, I knew that Perfect Pitch was real.

**I couldn't figure it out...**

"How does she DO it?" I kept asking myself. On the other hand, why can't *everyone* recognize tones by ear? It dawned on me: people call themselves *musicians* and yet they can't tell a C from a C#? Or A major from F major?! That's as strange as a

portrait painter who can't name the colors of paint on his palette! It all seemed odd and contradictory.

Humiliated and puzzled, I went home to work on this problem. At age 14, this was a hard nut to crack.

You can be sure I tried it for myself. With a little sweet-talking, I would get my three brothers and two sisters to play tones for me—to name by ear. But it turned into a guessing game I just couldn't win.

Day after day I tried to learn Perfect Pitch. I would play a tone *over and over* to make it stick in my head. But later I couldn't remember any of them. And I couldn't recognize any of the tones by ear. Somehow they all sounded the same after awhile; how were you supposed to know which was which—just by *listening*?

I would have done anything to have an ear like Linda, but it was way beyond my reach.

So, finally, I gave up.

**Then it happened...**

*It was like a miracle... a twist of fate... like finding the lost Holy Grail.* Once I stopped *straining* my ear, I started to listen *NATURALLY*. Then the incredible secret to Perfect Pitch jumped right into my lap.

I began to notice faint "colors" within the tones. Not *visual* colors, but colors of *pitch*, colors of *sound*. They had always been there. But this was the first time I had ever really "let go"—and *listened*—to discover these subtle differences.

Soon—to my own disbelief—I too could recognize the tones by ear! It was simple. I could hear how F# sounds one way, while B♭ has a *totally different sound*—sort of like "hearing" red and blue!

The realization struck me: THIS IS PERFECT PITCH! This is how Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart could mentally envision their masterpieces—and



"How in the world do you do it?" I blurted. I was totally boggled. (age 14, 9th grade)



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know tones, chords, and keys—all by ear!

It was almost childish—I felt sure that *anyone* could unlock their own Perfect Pitch by learning this simple secret of “color hearing.”

Bursting with excitement, I went to tell my best friend, Ann (a flutist).

She *laughed* at me. “You have to be *born* with Perfect Pitch,” she asserted. “You can’t *develop* it.”

“You don’t understand Perfect Pitch,” I countered.

I showed her how to listen. Timidly, she confessed that she too could hear the pitch colors. With this jump start, Ann soon realized that she had also gained Perfect Pitch for herself.

We became instant celebrities. Classmates loved to call out tones for us to magically sing from thin air. They played chords for us to name by ear. They quizzed us on what key a song was in. Everyone was endlessly fascinated with our “super-natural” powers, yet to Ann and me, it was just normal.

Back then I never dreamt I would later cause such a stir in the academic world. But as I entered college and started to explain my discovery, many professors *laughed* at me.

“You must be *born* with Perfect Pitch,” they’d say. “You can’t *develop* it.”

I would listen politely. Then I’d reveal the simple secret—so they could hear it for themselves. You’d be surprised how fast they changed their tune!

In college, my so-called “perfect ear” allowed me to skip over two required music courses. Perfect Pitch made *everything* easier for me—my ability to perform, compose, arrange, transpose, improvise, sight-read (because—without looking—you’re sure you’re playing the correct tones)—and my enjoyment of music skyrocketed. I learned that music is very definitely a HEARING art.

Oh, so you must be wondering what happened with Linda? Please excuse me, I’ll have to backtrack. . .

It was now my senior year of high school. I was nearly 18. In these three-and-a-half years with Perfect Pitch, my piano teacher insisted I had made ten years of progress. And I had. But my youthful ambition still wasn’t satisfied. I needed one more thing: to beat Linda. And now was my final chance.

The University of Delaware hosts a music festival

each spring, complete with judges and awards. To my horror, they scheduled me that year as the *grand finale* of the entire event.

The day arrived. Linda gave her usual sterling performance. She would be tough to match, let alone surpass. But my turn finally came, and I went for it.

Slinking to the stage, I sat down and played my heart out. The applause was overwhelming.

Later, posted on the bulletin board, I discovered my score of A+ in the most advanced performance category.

Linda got an A. Sweet victory was music to my ears—mine at last!

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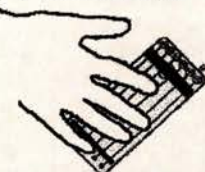
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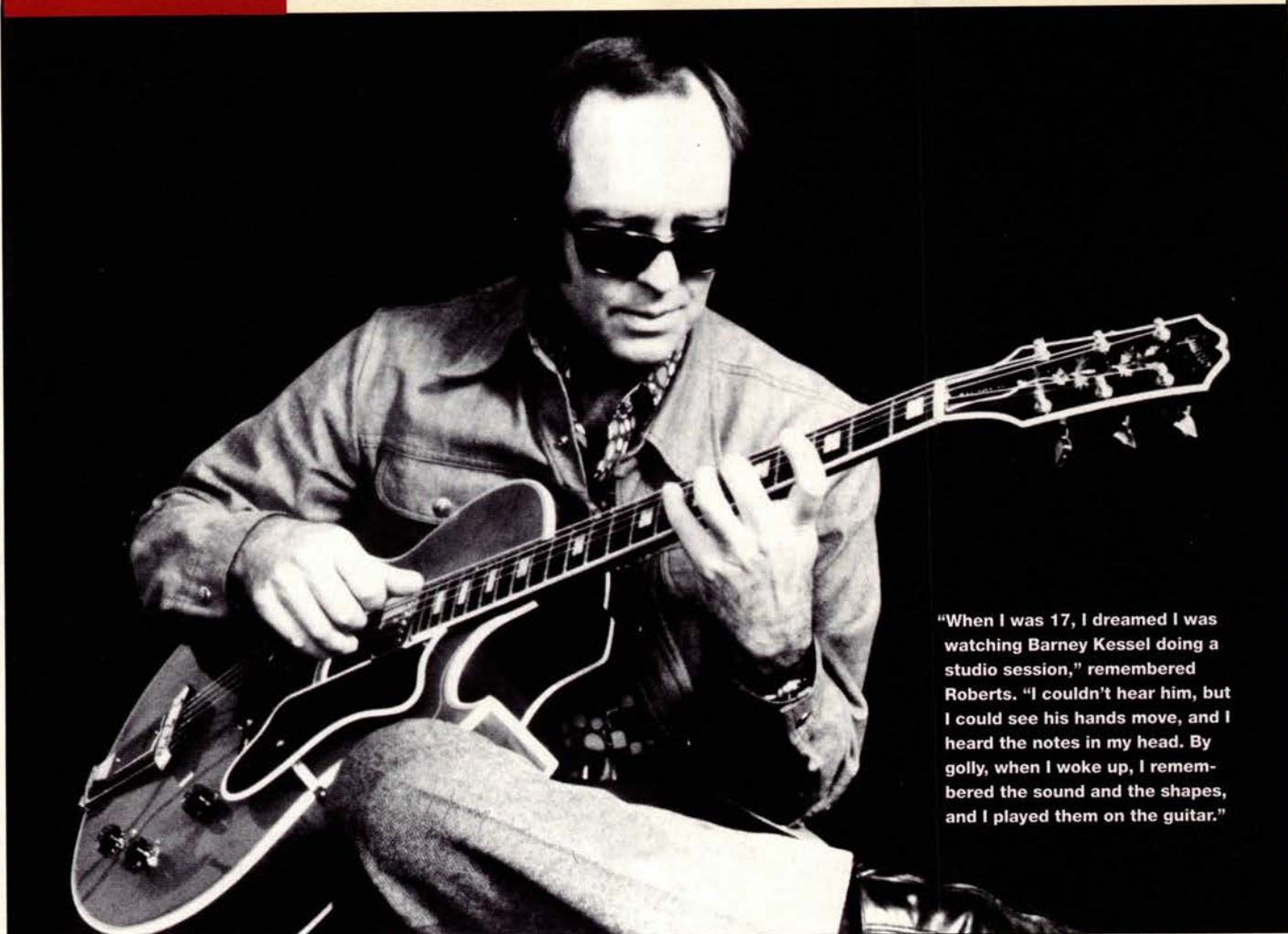
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"When I was 17, I dreamed I was watching Barney Kessel doing a studio session," remembered Roberts. "I couldn't hear him, but I could see his hands move, and I heard the notes in my head. By golly, when I woke up, I remembered the sound and the shapes, and I played them on the guitar."



### THE LATE HOWARD

Roberts was one of the best friends *Guitar Player*—and guitar players—ever had. Among the greatest jazz guitarists of all time, he also played on thousands of records (many of them hits), designed signature instruments for Gibson and Epiphone, wrote *GP* columns that people *still* talk about, and conducted sold-out seminars that attracted students ranging from beginners to seasoned veterans. Here are edited excerpts from Don Menn's June 1979 cover story with the inimitable and unforgettable Roberts. —TOM WHEELER

• • • • •

*Have you always been obsessed with music?*

I moved to L.A. when I was 20, and I spent my first year there wandering around town. I didn't have any place to live, or a car, or money, or even a change of clothes. All I had was a blue suit, a Gibson L-5 cutaway with a DeAr-

mond pickup, and a Gibson GA-50 amp. I'd play sessions, and someone would say, "Hey, you can sleep in my car tonight." I liked the idea of not being burdened with possessions. Even though it was uncomfortable at times, the trade-off was worth it.

*What's a good way to improve your technique?*

Putting what you study to immediate and practical use. Contrary to what you might think, long-range goals can be destructive. If you say, "Two years from now I'm going to be so-and-so good," you've sentenced yourself to two years of intermediacy. There's no such thing as an intermediate guitarist—it's just a personal view of oneself. Books say "Beginner" or "Advanced," but, to me, you're either doing it or you aren't.

Why learn a dull, lifeless exercise like "Mary Had a Little Lamb?" Why not learn technique as it occurs in, say, the Rodrigo *Concerto*? It's no harder. Learn the piece in your head before you play it. Then, play it

so slow there's no possibility of making a mistake. Slow is fast—that's the basic model of speed learning.

*Did you ever take a lesson from Barney Kessel?*

Yes. He taught me I didn't need to take lessons from him! I just needed to travel in faster company. When I got my chance, it was the good players who gave it to me. Here's how you get a break: You hang around with the good guys. The ones that aren't so good are often defensive, but the good guys have nothing to lose, and they wouldn't recommend an inferior player for a gig in a million years.

*Is Howard Roberts a composer, a studio player, a teacher, or a jazzer?*

On a clear day, if all things were wonderful, I'd be an explorer or an astronomer looking for a new star. Or I'd be a hobbyist who fools around with putting combinations of pitch and notes together. To me, the guitar is what a typewriter is to a novelist—it's a tool for expression. ■



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